

The LAND
OF JOY



BARBOUR

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THE LAND OF JOY

THE LAND OF JOY

By
RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

Youth, with swift feet, walks onward in the way;
The land of joy lies all before his eyes.—*Butler.*



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For My Wife

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CHAPTER I

JOHAN NORTH unlocked the door and threw it open. The study was in semi-darkness and filled with the accumulated heat and fust of the summer. Ghostlike objects took shape before him and resolved themselves into chairs and couches and tables draped with sheets or, as in the case of the low book-shelves, hidden beneath yellowing folds of newspapers. The windows were closed and the shades drawn. At the side casements the afternoon sunlight made hot, buff oblongs on the curtains.

He crossed the room impatiently, overturning on the way a waste-basket and sending its contents—old books, battered golf-balls, brass curtain-rings, a broken meerschaum pipe, crumbled letters and invitations dating back to class day—rolling over the rug and beneath the big table. With mutterings of disgust he sent the front windows crashing upward, letting in a rush of fresher air, moist from

the newly sprinkled pavement below. At the side casements, however, he drew down the shades again, for Dunster Street was as full of heat and glare as an Arizona cañon.

Laying aside coat and vest, he stretched his arms luxuriously, and, thrusting big, brown hands into trousers pockets, looked disconsolately from a window. Cambridge was sweltering. Although it was late September summer had returned in the night, unexpected and unwelcome, and had wrapped the city in a smothering blanket of heat and humidity. The square was a broad desert of arid, shimmering, sun-smitten pavement that radiated heat like the bed-plate of a furnace. The trees across the way looked wilted, dusty and discouraged. The Yard, which he could glimpse here and there around the corners of the buildings, appeared cool and inviting, but instead of bringing comfort, only increased his longing for the breezy Adirondack lake which he had left the day before. The cumbersome crimson cars buzzed to and fro with much clanging of bell and gong, interspersed with impatient shrillings from the whistle of the starter in front of the waiting station. From the outbound cars men with suit cases slid dejectedly to the

pavement and wandered away toward all points of the compass, seeking their rooms. College would begin again on the morrow.

John's thoughts went back to the day three years before when from this very window he had watched, as he was watching now, the scene beneath. Then he had been filled with the keenest interest, even excitement; had been impatient for the morrow and the real commencement of his college life. His mind had been charged with thoughts of the great things he was going to do. Well, that had been three years ago, he reflected; to-day his thoughts were somewhat soberer. In the three years he had seen many illusions fade and had stored by a certain amount of practical common sense. As for the great things, some few of them had come to pass; unfortunately, seen in retrospect they were shrunken out of all similitude to the glorious subjects of his early dreams.

It must not be thought, however, that disillusionment had soured him. At twenty-four, given a sane mind and a healthy body, one can bear with equanimity more disenchantment than had fallen to the lot of John North. And John, being the possessor of twenty-four years, sanity and health,

dismissed memories of the olden visions with a sigh, shrugged his very broad shoulders and looked about for a pipe.

It was necessary to uncover most of the furniture before the pipe was found. And then he remembered that his tobacco pouch was in his kit-bag, that his kit-bag was outside the door, and that the door was twenty feet away. So after a moment of hesitation he stuck the empty pipe between his teeth and returned to his contemplation of the world outside.

"I wish Davy would come," he muttered.

A tall youth in a torn straw hat encircled by a faded orange-and-black ribbon came out of the hardware store beneath and started hurriedly across the square. John leaned out over the sill.

"Ay-y-y-y, Larry!" he called.

The other turned and retraced his steps.

"Hello, Johnnie! When'd you get back?"

"Half-hour ago. Come up."

"Can't." Laurence Baker removed the straw hat and, holding it by its broken rim, fanned his perspiring face. "I'm frightfully busy. My kid brother's come up from Exeter and I'm helping him fix his room; he's got a joint in Thayer. I've been

running errands for the little brute all day. It's carpet tacks this time, and a roll of picture wire." He held up his purchases wearily for the other's inspection. John grinned.

"Poor old Larry!" he said, sympathetically. "You'll have to settle down now and behave yourself; younger brothers, especially Freshies, are the very deuce for looking after you."

"You talk as though you had slathers of 'em," retorted Larry.

"No, thank heaven, I'm no one's guardian. But I know what's in store for you, poor devil! By the way, I've got a couple of seats for the Hollis Street to-night; will you?"

Larry shook his head disconsolately.

"Wish I could, but—er—I promised Chester I'd take him to call on some folks in town." John grinned again.

"Well, don't let me interfere with your duties, Larry," he said, shaking his head gravely.

"Shut up! Has Davy got back?"

"No; the beggar wrote me that he was coming to-day, but he hasn't shown up. I daresay he's fallen asleep and gone on to Watertown or Waverly, or some other of those places you read about."

"Wouldn't be a bit surprised," laughed the other.
"When's the table going to start?"

"Oh, Monday, I guess. I'm going around there for dinner to-night. Coming?"

"Don't think so. We'll probably eat in town. Can't you come along?"

"Maybe; if Davy doesn't show up meanwhile."

"All right; meet us at the Touraine at seven. If you're not there by a quarter after——"

"Don't wait. It'll mean that Davy has woke up in time to get back here. So long, Larry."

The other waved the package in his hand, replaced his hat and hurried across the street, finally disappearing around the corner of Gray's. John looked after him with a broad smile.

"Fancy Larry in the rôle of mentor to the young! Well——"

He stretched his arms over his head again, turned and surveyed the room. Recollecting his bag, he went to the door for it and returning caught sight of several letters on the floor. He gathered them up and went back to the window. Two of them proved to be circulars, one was a bill, a third was a note from the head football coach asking John to call on him, and the fourth bore the inscription,

"Return after five days to Corliss & Groom, Washington, D. C."

John's face betrayed curiosity as he opened this. Leaning against the casement he read it through. Curiosity gave place to surprise, surprise to alarm, alarm to consternation. He sucked hard at the empty pipe, stared blankly into the street and reread the letter. The writer was an old friend of his father and, to a lesser degree, of himself; a Harvard graduate of some twenty years ago, and now a successful lawyer in Washington. The portions of the letter responsible for John's changes of expression were these:

" . . . And so I felt certain that in promising your services to the extent indicated I was not overstepping the bounds of friendship. The family were deeply grateful; in fact, I am not sure that at the last Mrs. Ryerson would have consented to allow Phillip to go to Cambridge had it not been for the promise I made in your behalf. Do not imagine that the boy is deficient in sense; but, naturally enough, his mother hated to have him leave her for so long just at present. The father died in January last. Phillip has always manifested ability to get his share of things; he does not, I think, err on the

side of timidity; in fact, such slight troubles as have molested him thus far have been due to a certain inherited love of daring. His father, my lifelong friend, was the embodiment of honour and fearlessness; but his courage, unfortunately, was of the reckless sort, and was, indirectly at least, accountable for his death. The quarrel, as I have said, was of a most trifling nature and should never have become subject for a duel. But Phillip—the present Phil's father, you understand—was but thirty at the time and as finicky of his honour as a Crusader. The wound which he received never entirely healed and last winter brought on the illness which caused his death.

“ . . . But I will write no more of the boy's character. Were you a Virginian I should simply say ‘He is a Loudoun County Ryerson,’ and you would understand. However, you will see for yourself, for I am accepting it as settled that you will look him up and be of such service as you can if only for our friendship's sake. I fear the boy will have rather a hard row to hoe at first. He has always had everything in reason that he has desired, though I believe his demands have never been exorbitant. It was a surprise to the family when

the condition of affairs was revealed after Phillip's death. I, however, who was in his confidence, knew all along how things were going. He was never overfond of the humdrum, stay-at-home life of the planter, and the mystery is how he managed to keep possession of his property as long as he did. Elaine is a fine place of some sixteen hundred acres, and there is no doubt but that after the bulk of it is disposed of the family will be in very comfortable circumstances.

"Mrs. Ryerson has been in poor health for many years, and she is naturally averse to selling any of the estate while she lives. Margaret, however, who possesses far more practicality than a Ryerson has any right to, has taken the conduct of affairs into her own hands, and I have instructions to sell Elaine at the first opportunity. The residence and home farm—about one hundred acres in all—are exempted. The fact that the place is to be disposed of is being kept from Phil, so you had best not mention it. He has been told only enough of the true state of affairs to prevent him from running into extravagances. It is the desire of his mother and sister that he shall not be hampered by monetary troubles more than absolutely necessary. . . .

" . . . I have written at greater length than was perhaps necessary. But I want you to take an interest in the boy. I have a feeling that you will be of great service to him. I imagine that college life is much what it was twenty years ago, and my own experience tells me that the friendship of an older and more thoughtful man is of immense value to a freshman. . . .

" . . . Phillip is careless, perhaps high-spirited, and after the free and unconstrained life he has led at home, college life will, I fear, seem narrow and irksome. Every youngster must have his fling, but there are different ways of flinging. And it's there that you can be of use to Phil and make me your debtor. He's a good deal like a two-year-old turned out to pasture where the fences aren't strong; it's dollars to dimes he'll try to break through into the next field. But a mild hand on the halter now and then may save him a broken shank or a bad wire-cut. And, by the way, John, if he should get damaged over the fences I'm the one to inform, not the family.

"I am sorry to learn that your father's health remains poor. I had a letter from him in July, I think, written at Guernsey. I had hoped that his

travels would benefit him. It must be very hard on your mother. My kindest regards to both when next you write. Pray remember that the latchstring is always outside when you get within striking distance of Washington. My wife asks to be remembered to you, and says that the south room, with the view that you liked so much, is still vacant and always at your service. Let me hear from you in answer to this tiresome letter, and meanwhile accept my thanks for what I have pledged you to do.

“Gratefully yours,

“GEORGE HERMAN CORLISS.”

After the second reading John let fall the letter and stared perplexedly out across the square. Gradually a smile crept over his face, and finally he chuckled ruefully.

“Great Scott!” he muttered. “And I was horse-ing Larry about his kid brother! Why, hang it, his job is a sinecure compared with mine. If a brother doesn’t behave himself all you have to do is to break his silly little head. But here am I saddled with the responsibility of an absolute stranger, a chap whose name I never even heard until to-day! I can’t punch his nose if he misbe-

haves; he would probably resent it, coming from an entire stranger; all I can do is to politely request him to be good. And meanwhile his family and Corliss will be quite satisfied that the precious youth is being gently but firmly conducted along the path of virtue and sobriety and won't give a thought to the difficulties of the situation.

"And if—what's the young idiot's name?—if Phillip should blow up Massachusetts with a cannon-cracker some dark night, or assault a proctor, my reputation's blasted. I shall lose my position and be held up to disgrace forevermore. I'm not certain that the Virginia legislature wouldn't pass a law making the mention of my name a misdemeanor. And Corliss would tell Mrs. Corliss that he was disappointed in me—confound his cheek! And Margaret—I wonder, now, what Margaret's like? Corliss says she's practical. That's not promising. Nothing is more irritating than a practical woman. But maybe she isn't. Anyhow, I'd be sorry to displease Margaret. And so I suppose I'll have to take over the commission."

He crossed the room to his bag and filled his pipe from a leather pouch. When it was drawing well he drew a chair up to the window and settled him-

self in it, his heels on the sill. The tobacco brought comfort.

"I wish Davy was here. He's the finest person to consult when you're in difficulties that I know. He simply smiles in his fatuous way or else scowls weirdly under the impression that he's looking wise, and goes to sleep. And you've unburdened your mind and haven't reburdened it with a lot of advice that you wouldn't think of following. And the present quandary will tickle Davy into a month's slumber! Well, let's face it. Am I or am I not to become the guardian angel of Mr. Phillip Scott Ryerson, of Elaine, Melville Court House, County of Loudoun, State of Virginia?" He tossed the letter from him. "Why, confound it, I haven't any choice! Corliss pledges me first and asks my consent afterward! 'We have apple pie; what kind of pie'll you have?' Heaven protect us from the claims of friendship!"

"But old George must be pretty well worked up over the matter to write all that rot. You'd think it was his own son he is begging me to care for! And of course I've got to do it. He knew I would. He's a good old idiot, is Grovel, and I suppose if he'd asked me to wheel little Phillip up and down

the avenue every day in a perambulator I'd have wired him back 'Whatever you say,' and done it."

"Seriously, though, my boy, it's no light job they've got you into. From what Corliss says—or, rather, from what he doesn't say—it is pretty evident that little Phillip is a holy terror. He is undoubtedly thoroughly spoiled, and comes here with the sole intention of, as Corliss so delicately puts it, breaking through into the next field. Old George is getting frightfully horsey, by the way! And I am to follow him about, smiling fatuously like an indulgent parent, murmuring 'Now don't do that, Phillip!' or 'No, no, dear; mind Uncle John!'"

He looked at his watch and found it was nearly four o'clock. With a sudden determination to hunt up his charge and learn the worst at once, he drew himself regretfully from the chair and rescued the letter from the floor. Donning his jacket, he slipped letter and tobacco pouch into his pocket.

"I'll get this dive fixed up and dusted before dinner if I can find any one about," he murmured. "It looks like a morgue."

The sound of heavy footsteps in the corridor brought a grin to his face. Rushing to the door, he threw himself violently into the arms of a large

and perspiring man. A suit case crashed to the floor.

"Oh, Davy!" he sobbed, "I'm so glad you've come! I've wanted you so, Davy, I've wanted you so! Hold me tighter, Davy; they've gone and made me a foster-mother!"

CHAPTER II

DAVID MEADOWCAMP removed John's clinging embrace, placed his suit case on the couch and sat down beside it, smiling jovially the while.

"Eh?" he said.

He was a massive, large-boned, broad-faced man, two years John's senior. Outwardly he was good-natured, sleepy, awkward, with a shock of jet black hair that was forever falling over his forehead and giving him the unkempt look of one just out of bed, an appearance aided by his manner of attire. Good-natured he was, and sleepy; his capacity for slumber seemed almost abnormal; his awkwardness was more apparent than real, for he had been a star left tackle on the 'Varsity football team during his last two years in college. Persons who judged him by his looks were usually mistaken in their estimate of the quantity and quality of his brains. Despite his likeness to a good-humoured dullard, he possessed an assimilative ability that was phenomenal, and had secured his

degree in three years. He was now taking a post-graduate course. John declared it was because he was too lazy to pack his trunk and go home. It was generally understood that he was preparing himself to follow in the footsteps of his father, who was the president of a New York bank, and who, so rumour had it, was unable to count his millions without the aid of all his fingers and toes. David and John had been roommates from their freshman year, and in all that time had never had but one real quarrel; and even that, as John had pointed out aggrievedly after it was over, had been too one-sided to be interesting. For David had drowsed through most of it and had only consented to display real concern when John, goaded to madness by the other's indifference, had thrown a pair of military brushes at him. Thereupon David had arisen in his might and, depositing the struggling opponent on the bedroom floor, had drawn the mattress over him and gone to sleep on top.

David removed his clothing by easy stages while John told his troubles. His grin grew and broadened as the tale progressed. At the end he dropped the last of his attire, stretched his six feet of nakedness and disappeared into

the bathroom. John howled and beat upon the door.

"Come out, you hard-hearted brute! Come out and I'll—I'll lick you!"

There was no sound from beyond the locked portal but the rushing of water from the taps.

"Coward!" taunted John.

"Worm!"

"White-livered coyote!"

The taps were turned off and there followed an awesome splash. Then it rained water for a moment beyond the door; afterward there was a steady churning sound as from the wheel of a Sound steamer. John tried cajollery.

"Davy! Dear Davy! Booful Davy!"

"Go 'way," yelled the bather.

"Please don't be angry, Davy! Tell me, Davy, what shall I do?"

"Go see him."

"Oh . . . would you?"

"Yep."

"Will you come along?"

There was a snort of derision from the bathroom.

"You might, you know, Davy."

"Never!"

"But your presence would be so—so soothing and soporific, Davy! Won't you?"

"No."

"All right then, don't, you big selfish brute!" He moved away from the door and his eyes fell on David's clothing scattered generously over the study. Picking up the coat he abstracted a bill-roll from a pocket and helped himself to a five-dollar note. Then he hid the coat under the couch and went back to the bathroom door.

"Little Phillip may act naughty, Davy, and so I've borrowed a fiver from you to buy him candy."

"Better get him a bottle," gurgled David.

"Farewell, Davy. I'll see you later. I've got tickets for the Hollis. So don't run away."

On the street John found that the unseasonable heat had moderated somewhat. As he turned into Boylston Street a faint breeze, redolent of the marshes, blew into his face and caused him to tilt his hat away from his sunburned forehead. In front of the post-office he was hailed by an acquaintance, one Broom, a member of the Eleven.

"I hear you're going to help coach this fall, North?"

"First I've heard of it," answered John. "Though

I found a note in my mail that rather bears out your statement, Pete. But I don't know whether I'll have time for it."

"Rot, my boy, rot! It doesn't require time; any old fool can coach a football team."

"On the principle that it takes a fool to teach a fool, eh?"

"Sure. Where are you going? Come on 'round to the drug store and drink cooling draughts."

John groaned and shook his head.

"Can't, Pete. I'm a foster-mother."

"A *what?*"

"Foster-mother. Good-by!"

"You're an idiot, you mean. Come around to the hovel soon."

"All right."

John brought forth the fateful letter and made sure of the address he was seeking. At least, he thought, it had the merit of accessibility, for it was just around the corner. It proved to be an old-fashioned residence, two stories and a half in height, with a porch running across the front. It was painted a peculiarly depressing shade of gray, but for all that, and despite the fact that the front door opened almost from the sidewalk, it was homelike

and even attractive; and was plainly a house with a history. Its dignity was somewhat marred by two placards in the front windows advertising "Student Rooms to Let" and "Table Board." It faced a little square of comforting trees, grass and shrubbery, and from the porch a bit of the river could be seen. An express wagon piled high with trunks stood at the curb. John ascended the steps and rang the bell. The front door was broad and substantial and was flanked by sidelights, while a dusty fanlight above hinted at the splendour of olden days.

"I wonder," mused John, "just which Revolutionary general made his headquarters here. I don't see any tablet; very careless of the Historical Society."

The maid who answered his ring thought that Mr. Ryerson was in because she had sent an expressman up with a trunk a few minutes before. The room, she directed, was the second-story-front on the left. John thanked her and started up the narrow staircase with its queer slim mahogany hand-rail. Half-way up he became aware of quick, heavy tramping from the direction of the room he was seeking. He paused and listened. *Bang—*

bang! Tramp—tramp! Thud—thud! Wonderingly he went on, turned and approached the door. From beyond came the unmistakable scuffling and tramping of bodies, the panting of persons apparently engaged in severe physical exertion, and through it all the plaintive whining of a dog. Suddenly a chair crashed to the floor. The noise ceased.

“Had enough?” asked a high, boyish voice.

“No! You?” answered a deeper one.

“Come on then!”

The noise began again, while the dog, apparently in a bedroom or closet beyond, set up a dismal howl. John knocked loudly.

“Keep out!” called a shrill voice somewhat breathlessly.

“Is Mr. Ryerson in?”

“No.” Then, in lower tones: “Ah, would you! Take that!”

“He is in,” reflected John, “and he’s having a boxing bout with some one and doesn’t want to be disturbed. But, the Lord knows, if I don’t see him this time I’ll never have the courage to try again. And so——” He tried the door. It was unlocked and he pushed it open and entered. Then he stood stock still and stared in surprise.

In the middle of the room, a large, oblong apartment traversed overhead by beams painted the same hue as the outside of the house, and lighted by three large windows in deep embrasures, stood two persons. Each had discarded coat and vest, but was, nevertheless, bathed in perspiration. One whose Irish features and soiled appearance proclaimed him the expressman, presented a sadly disfigured countenance. He was breathing with difficulty and from his nose crimson drops spattered onto the bosom of his dirty checked shirt. One eye was puffed and a short gash over the cheek bone bled freely. These disfigurations, with an ugly scowl, rendered him extremely unattractive. John's gaze swept past him to the person beyond.

A tall, rather slim youth of nineteen confronted him. His eyes, which at the moment were wide open with surprise and annoyance, and his hair, worn somewhat long about the ears and at the back of the neck, were darkly brown. His face was oval, lean, with cheek bones well in sight; the complexion was rather sallow, but now the cheeks were disked with red. The nose was straight, the mouth full-lipped, the general expression of the face fearless, ardent and a trifle arrogant. The carriage was

erect and easy and the width of hip and thigh told of long acquaintance with the saddle. So far he appeared to have escaped punishment.

"That," quoth John to himself, "is little Phil."

"Well, sir?" The slim youth dropped his hands from their belligerent attitude and faced John, issuing the challenge with ill-concealed annoyance.

"You're Mr. Phillip Ryerson, I fancy?" said John.

"Yes, sir; what then?"

"Why, I must apologize for interrupting you. My name——"

"I reckon you're a proctor," interrupted the other brusquely. "I'm very busy just at present, and so, if there's anything more I can do for you, please tell me. If not——" He glanced toward the door. The expressman shuffled uneasily and looked tentatively at his coat and vest. John sank onto a trunk and allowed an appreciative smile to creep into his face. Really, little Phillip wasn't so bad! "I'm glad he doesn't mistake me for the Dean," he thought, "or he would be throwing me out the window!"

"Why, there is something more you can do for me," he said aloud, "but it can wait. Pray don't

let my presence interfere with the meeting; I have always taken great interest in the manly art. Perhaps I can hold the watch for you?"

The slim youth's eyes sparkled dangerously and the crimson disks spread.

"Perhaps you would care to take the place of this—ah—gentleman, sir?" he asked with elaborate courtesy. John applauded silently. But,

"No," he said, with a regretful shake of his head, "unfortunately I can't accept your kind invitation. Some other time, perhaps."

"But if I insist that you either do so or leave my room?" continued the other, his anger getting the better of his polite tones. John shrugged his shoulders. The expressman was getting into his coat, growling loudly.

"I shall get out," John replied frankly, smiling into the boy's angry face. "But before that," he went on, "let us have a few minutes of conversation. Afterward, if you still persist, I will leave without being dropped from the window." The other, suddenly realizing that John was at least fifty pounds heavier and very much stronger, scented sarcasm and grew more incensed.

"I can't imagine what you may have to say, sir,

but I—" he pronounced it *Ah*—"assure you that I have no desire to hear a word of it. You will oblige me by quitting my room."

"Say," interrupted the expressman, "do I get paid for that trunk or don't I?"

"Yes, you do," answered his late adversary. "You get fifty cents for bringing it out from Boston, but you don't get anything for toting it upstairs."

"All right, give me the fifty. Gee, I've wasted a quarter of an hour here now; I could have made another fifty in that time."

"You acknowledge, then, do you, that you had no right to ask an extra fee for bringing it upstairs?"

"Aw, what yer givin' us? I ain't askin' for it, am I?" He turned to John and with difficulty winked his eye slyly. "I guess I got a quarter's worth, eh?"

"You look as though you had," replied John gravely.

"You can go now," said the host.

"Aw, is that so?" growled the expressman.

"And here's your money." He handed the other a crisp dollar bill.

"What's to keep me from pocketin' the whole thing?" asked the expressman.

"Nothing; that's what you're to do. I'm giving you fifty cents for the trunk and fifty cents for a tip." The expressman opened his eyes until they threatened to fall from his head.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he gasped. "Say, why couldn't you give me the quarter I asked for in the first place?"

"Because I didn't please to," was the calm response. "Your demand was unjust."

"Oh, you're a wonder!" sighed the other hopelessly. "But, say, any time you want to go on with this, just let me know. You got the best of it to-day, but then you haven't been wrestling with trunks since seven o'clock. Next time it might be different, eh?"

There was no answer and the expressman pocketed his money, winked good-naturedly at John and went out.

"Good-by, sonny," he called from the hall. John smiled and Phillip Ryerson, scowling haughtily at him from the centre of the room, saw it and clenched his hands.

"Now, sir, if you'll be so kind as to follow!" he said in a high, arrogant voice. John's temper suddenly gave way and he arose from the trunk.

He moved slowly across the apartment until he was facing his host.

"Look here, you are Ryerson, aren't you—Phillip Ryerson, of Something-or-other Court House, What-you-call-it County, State of Virginia?"

"Yes." Phillip's curiosity for a moment got the best of his wrath. "How do you know so much about me?" he asked suspiciously.

"Oh, what does it matter?" answered John wearily. "But since you are Ryerson, allow me to tell you that you're a very fresh little boy and ought to have a thundering good spanking. Good-afternoon."

Phillip watched him in silence until he had reached the door; he was very angry, deeply insulted, but he was also rather uneasy. His visitor, now that he observed him more closely, did not look quite like an impertinent proctor. He wondered if he had not been a bit ill-mannered and hasty. After all, if he wanted people to keep out of his room he should have locked the door. He took a step forward, his lips shaping a hurried apology. But the visitor passed into the hall, and after a moment of hesitation Phillip shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him go, hang him!" he muttered.

John found David at the dinner table. The former's face still expressed a measure of exasperation as he sank into a chair at his friend's side. David grinned.

"How did you find the boy, Johnnie?" he asked.

John flirted his napkin open and eyed his thick soup with disfavour before he answered.

"Well, Davy," he said finally, "I think he'll do. I found him beating an expressman to jelly because the latter wanted to overcharge him. He seems a peculiarly gentle, amiable youth, and I think he will get on very nicely without our tender care, Davy."

"*Our* care!"

"I should have said mine. And I believe I neglected to add that later on he ordered me out of his room and that I went."

David chuckled loudly.

"The sweet child!" he exclaimed. "Johnnie, I can see that you are destined to spend a busy, useful and not uninteresting year."

"Not I," answered John. "I shan't go near the little fool again. And Corliss can look somewhere else for a nurse for the precious kid."

But David shook his head solemnly.

"That won't do, Johnnie. You can't shift responsibilities like that; you've got a duty to perform, my boy, and I shall see that you attend to it. You must make allowances for the poor child's fiery Southern nature, and——"

"Fiery Southern fiddlesticks! Eat your dinner, man; we're going in to the theatre."

And they went. And David slept peacefully through three acts of a Pinero comedy and enjoyed it hugely

CHAPTER III

THE bell on Harvard Hall clanged imperatively and a new college year began. The leaves in the Yard rustled tremulously under the touch of a cool breeze out of the east, and here and there one fluttered downward, dropping from branch to branch lightly, lingeringly, as though loath to own its life at an end. Summer, which had loitered overlate in New England, had stolen southward in the night and to-day autumn was firmly enthroned. There was a crispness in the air that bade the blood run swifter; feet that yesterday had dragged themselves wearily over the hot pavements to-day trod the walks blithely; overhead the sky showed a different blue, more distant and ethereal. It was good to be alive.

Phillip Ryerson, hurrying across the yard to his first recitation, felt the invigoration of the morning. Yesterday had been a day of trials and vexations; to-day he experienced a pleasurable excitement and a comforting faith in his ability to hold his own in this new little world into which, by means of

certain nightmarish examinations the mere recollection of which made him shudder, he had fought his way. He had lived his life out-of-doors and was susceptible to Nature's every mood. To-day he was laughing brightly and Phillip's heart echoed the laughter. Under one far-shading tree he paused, unaware of the curious or amused glances thrown upon him by passers, and looked upward into the green, sun-flecked gloom of interlacing branches and sniffed the delicate odour exhaled therefrom. Suddenly a faint, almost imperceptible stir far up the grayish trunk caught his senses. He watched and presently two little eyes twinkled down at him inquiringly. He uttered a softly shrill whistle and in response there was an excited chattering in the branches and a sleek squirrel descended nimbly, swaying a thick, handsome tail, until he clung head-downward a foot or two out of reach.

"Hello, Mister Gray Squirrel," said Phillip softly. "Come on down. Can't you see I haven't got a gun? Anyway, I reckon you wouldn't know a gun if you saw it, would you?"

The squirrel chattered volubly, his bright eyes twinkling hither and thither and his little nose working anxiously.

"Why, you little rascal," cried Phillip, "you're asking for breakfast. I'm mighty sorry, but I don't reckon I've got anything you'll care about. Let's see." He searched his pockets carefully, the squirrel edging a few inches nearer and watching him intently. But, save for a few crumbs of tobacco, Phillip's pockets contained nothing that had even the appearance of edibles. He shook his head.

"Not a thing," he said aloud. "But you wait until next time and I'll bring you some nuts." The squirrel seemed to understand, for he squeaked disappointedly and turned tail. Footsteps crossed the grass and Phillip turned.

"I guess he'll eat peanuts all right."

A fellow of about Phillip's age approached. He was a sunny-haired, blue-eyed youth, and Phillip thought he had never seen one cleaner or more wholesome. He smiled genially and held out three or four peanuts.

"Let's try these on him," he said. "Here, Sport!"

The squirrel looked doubtfully for an instant at the newcomer, and then his eyes fell on the delicacies and he scrambled down onto the grass and approached bravely.

"Some of them will eat out of your hand," said the yellow-haired youth. "Come and get them if you want them."

The squirrel hesitated a moment at arm's length and then ran forward and seized the nut. Retiring to the foot of the tree, he ate it hurriedly, apparently fearful that the others would escape him if he lingered overlong at the first.

"Tame, aren't they?" said Phillip.

"Yes. There are lots of them here in the Yard. There's one chap—he has part of his tail chewed off, so I know him—came up to my window-ledge yesterday and just begged. So I got some peanuts for him. But he hasn't been around yet to-day, though I saw him in a tree a minute ago. Come on, Sport; here's another. I can't wait here all day, you know."

The invitation was readily accepted and, tossing the rest of the nuts onto the grass, the youth turned away. Phillip followed and the two walked along together, hurrying a little, since the bell had ceased its summons.

"I guess this isn't your first year?" said the blue-eyed fellow questioningly.

"It is, though," answered Phillip.

"Really? I thought——" He hesitated and then turned a laughing face to the other. "I guess I won't say it."

"Go ahead," begged Phillip. "I can't see how you could have taken me for an old stager."

"Well, you looked so kind of don't-give-a-hang, standing under the tree there, that I thought you were probably a soph. Hope you won't take that as an insult."

"No indeed; why should I? I rather wish I was a sophomore, I reckon."

"Phew! That's regular treason! Don't you know that a freshman holds a soph. in the deepest contempt?"

"No, I didn't know it. Why?"

"Oh—well, just because, I guess. It's—it's reciprocal. You have to; it's part of the game."

"Oh." Phillip looked puzzled. They had reached the steps of the recitation hall. "Well, I'm going in here," he said, hesitatingly.

"So'm I," answered his new acquaintance. "And say, afterward come over to my room in Thayer with me and we'll see if we can't find that other squirrel, eh?"

"Thanks," answered Phillip; "I'll look for you."

“Oh, come on; we'll get seats together.”

But they didn't, and so, for a time, Phillip lost sight of the other. But during the next half-hour his thoughts were busy with him. It did not seem extraordinary to him that the blue-eyed youth should have made overtures of friendship as he had. In Virginia one spoke to strangers on the road, and common courtesy demanded a certain disregard of conventionalities. Later, however, when Phillip had seen more of college life and customs, he marveled greatly. Now he wondered what the white E embroidered on the other's crimson cap meant, and resolved to purchase a cap just like it at once. Also, the stunning shirt of white and green and pink stripes worn by his new acquaintance made him dissatisfied with his own stiff-bosomed affair; and he acknowledged the superiority, from the standpoint of picturesqueness, of knickerbockers and golf stockings over long trousers. He wondered how much such articles of apparel cost and what would be left to him of his present capital after he had made such purchases as now seemed necessary.

He found the crimson cap waiting for him on the steps when he filed out and he ranged his own straw hat beside it. Together the two made their way

past University to the farther end of Thayer. Here Phillip was guided into a corner study on the first floor.

On the door a clean, new card was tacked and Phillip read the inscription as he passed:

“Mr. Chester M. Baker.”

He made a mental note to order some like it and throw away those he had, on which his name was engraved in a flowing script which he had heretofore thought very beautiful, but which he now surmised to be sadly out of style.

The study in which Phillip found himself was homelike and well furnished, but in no way remarkable. The pictures were few and good; the rugs and upholsterings were bright and aggressively new; only the cushions in the window-seat and the half-hundred books showed the dignity of usage. But Phillip thought it a very nice room, with its view of greensward and swaying branches through the open windows, and regretted that he had not secured quarters in the Yard. His host tossed the crimson cap onto the table.

“Sit down,” he said. “By the way, you haven’t any recitation for this hour, have you?”

Phillip shook his head, and his host went on:

"All right; let's see if we can find Raggles."

"Raggles?" questioned Phillip.

"Yes, the squirrel; I call him Raggles because his tail is all frayed out. And talking of names, mine's Baker."

"And mine's Ryerson," answered Phillip.

"Now we know who we are," said Baker. He went to the window and threw some peanuts onto the gravel outside. Phillip followed and, peering over the other's shoulder, waited for the squirrel to appear. But, although they offered every inducement, Raggles failed to present himself, and they made themselves comfortable on the window-seat and ate the peanuts themselves.

"Would you mind telling me what this E stands for?" asked Phillip, pointing to one of the cushions. "I saw it on your cap, you know." Baker looked surprised.

"Why, Exeter," he answered.

"Oh," said Phillip. "That's in New Hampshire, isn't it?"

"Yes." The host was plainly bewildered at the other's ignorance. "Where did you prepare?" he asked.

Phillip named a small academy near Richmond, and Baker nodded his head politely.

"You live in Virginia?" he asked.

"Yes, at Melville Court House. It's about fifty miles from Alexandria. This is the first time I have been so far north, except last spring when I came up for exams."

"I knew you were a Southerner," smiled Baker. "You say 'Ah' for I and 'aboot' for about. It's great; I wish I could do it. I talk through my silly nose, like all Yankees."

"I think you talk very nicely," said Phillip. "I suppose I do pronounce things differently from folks up North here. Do you live in Boston?"

"Save us!" cried Baker. "No, I'm from Rutland, Vermont. When you meet a real, dyed-in-the-wool Bostonian you'll see the difference. Do you know any folks in town?"

"No. I haven't any acquaintances at all hereabouts except my adviser. You're the first one," he added with a smile.

"Really?" cried Baker. "Well, I know stacks of fellows and I'll introduce you 'round. My chum's a chap named Bassett. You'll like Guy; he's awfully jolly. We'll have lots of fun. Only——" his

face fell—"only the trouble is that Laurence is here."

"Laurence?"

"Yes, he's my big brother; a senior. That makes it awkward, you see, because he'll think it's his plaguey duty to keep watch on me. I wanted to go to Yale for that reason, but dad thought it would be better if I came here so that Laurence could guide my trembling footsteps during my first year in the midst of college temptations." He grinned. "Dad thinks Laurence is a wonder. But if he gets too obnoxious I'll threaten to tell some of the things I know about him."

"I should think it would be rather nice to have a brother in college," said Phillip. "I wish I had."

"If you had you'd wish you hadn't. Where do you room?"

Phillip told him.

"I didn't try for a room in the Yard," he explained, "because my father went here and he lived outside. We used to talk about it before—before he died, and we decided that I was to get a place outside, too. I reckon if it hadn't been that father went here I'd have gone to the University."

"The University?" queried Baker.

"University of Virginia. But father always wanted that I should go to Harvard. Of course, I wished to please him, but if I'd had my choice I'd have gone to the University. You see, I'd have known more fellows there. Up here I only know you and a senior; and I haven't met him yet."

Baker looked mystified and Phillip went on.

"Father had a friend in Washington, and when he learned that I was coming up here he wrote to a friend of his, a senior here, and asked him to call on me. But I haven't seen him yet."

"What's his name?"

"North; John North. Do you know him?"

"No, I've never met him yet," answered Baker, "but Laurence is going to take me 'round to see him to-night, I think. But if John North's your friend, you'll get on finely. He knows everybody worth knowing and is a regular high muckamuck himself. You're in luck."

"Am I? I thought likely he'd call last night, but he didn't."

"Well, I guess he's pretty busy. I hear he's going to be assistant football coach this fall; you know he's played for the last three years on the 'Varsity."

"I think I'd like to play football," said Phillip.

"I daresay," laughed Baker. "So'd I. I'd like to play quarter on the 'Varsity, but I don't think I shall."

"Why, is it hard to get on the team?"

"It's like pulling teeth unless you're an A 1 player. I'm going to try for the Freshman Eleven; you'd better, too. Then, if you make that and get on all right, you'll stand a show for the 'Varsity next fall. Have you played much?"

"No, I've never played at all."

"Oh; well, you'll find it hard at first," said Baker. "Candidates for the Freshman team are called for to-morrow afternoon. If you like, Guy and I'll call for you on our way over to the field."

"Thank you; I wish you would," replied Phillip. "What must I wear?"

"Oh, any old sweater and a pair of moleskins."

"I'll have to get some, I reckon."

"You can get them at the Coöperative Society, if you don't want to go into town. What courses are you taking?"

For the next quarter of an hour the talk ranged over the subject of studies, and Phillip discovered, on the authority of his host, that he had made

several frightful mistakes in his choice of courses, and was quite cast down until Baker assured him that it didn't matter anyhow, because no one studied much in his freshman year. Phillip expressed surprise, and Baker explained that a fellow had too much to do to find time for grinding.

"Of course," he allowed, "you have to keep up with things after a fashion, for there are the mid-years; but you'll soon find out just how much work is necessary. Lots of fellows loaf until just before the exams and then turn to and grind and take seminars, but I've made up my mind to do a little every day, you know, and keep up with the course of events, as it were. Besides, it costs like the very deuce to be coached. Why, there are some coaches ask twenty and even twenty-five dollars for a seminar, and get it, too! Laurence says he was broke for six months after the mid-years last winter."

"I couldn't afford that," said Phillip, thoughtfully. "But I reckon I'll follow your plan and keep up with things. I suppose I'm going to have hard work, for I had an awful time passing the exams."

"Oh, well, that doesn't cut much ice," answered Baker. "It's hard to get into this old place, but

fairly easy to get along afterward. Now, some of the other colleges let you in easy, they say, and you're tickled to death and think you've got nothing to do but look pretty. But you find that you've got to study like the deuce to stay there, and you wish exams hadn't been so soft and that you'd learned a lot more before you came. Do you like theatres?"

"Yes, immensely; although I've never been a great deal."

"No more have I—that is, not such a lot. I've seen pretty much everything good, but there's a lot of jolly nonsense I've missed. I'm going to change that. I love melodrama. Did you ever see 'The Great Northwest'? or 'The Convict's Daughter'? or 'The Great White Diamond'?"

Phillip shook his head apologetically. Somehow, he felt rather small and unimportant in the presence of the easy-mannered, laughing-eyed youth before him.

"And there are usually some jolly good burlesque shows in town. And I'm going to see 'Florodora' and 'San Toy' and 'Miss Simplicity' when they come. Guy and I and two or three other dubs

are going in to the Museum Friday night; want to come along? We'd be glad to have you."

"Thanks," answered Phillip, doubtfully. "I don't believe——"

"Oh, poppycock, of course you'll come. I'll get a seat for you, anyhow. That reminds me, I must do it to-day. You get them at Thurston's and have them charged and they cost about a thousand dollars apiece. It's very convenient."

"Well, I'll go then," laughed Phillip. "I only hesitated because I haven't been going around to things much lately. You see, my father died only last winter. But I should like to go if you're sure your friends won't mind."

"They'll be tickled into convulsions," declared Baker. "Well, I guess we'll have to go and try another stunt. It's five minutes of."

They passed out together and parted company in front of University.

"Come and see me often," commanded Baker. "Let's set things humming. And we'll stop for you at your joint to-morrow afternoon about three-thirty."

He waved a note-book and hurried off, whistling at the top of his lungs. Phillip fished a schedule

from his pocket, learned where his ten o'clock recitation was held, tried to remember where that particular hall was located, consulted a pocket directory filled with boarding-house advertisements, and finally strode on. And as he went he reflected ruefully that if he was going to keep pace with Chester Baker and the unknown Guy Bassett and their companions, his already sadly diminished capital, originally designed to last him until the Christmas recess, would very soon be only a memory. But after three days in Cambridge without acquaintances, the new friendship between Baker and himself was such a pleasant thing that the contemplation of it drove all disquieting thoughts out of his mind.

"After all," he told himself when, at noon, he climbed into one of the revolving stools at the dairy lunch counter and demanded sandwiches and pudding and milk, "I reckon the first expense is always bigger than you look for. And after Christmas I'll settle down and economize."

CHAPTER IV

PHILLIP couldn't help thinking, when, attired in his new football togs, he faced his reflection in the mirror, that he was doing himself and perhaps the college an injustice in trying for the freshman team instead of the 'varsity. He grew quite uneasy about it and wondered for a moment whether Chester Baker's sudden friendship was not part of a deeply laid plan to secure his services for the minor eleven. But he kept his misgivings to himself when, at half-past three the next afternoon, he found himself being conducted over to Soldiers' Field by Chester Baker and Guy Bassett.

The latter youth looked to be a year or so older than Chester, and was tall and distinguished-appearing even in the well-worn canvas trousers and faded sweater. He had what Phillip was sure were "chiseled features," with very steady brown eyes set far apart and brown hair that was parted in the middle and which was as smooth and glossy as though newly ironed. Phillip thought

his manners wonderful; he had shaken hands with a degree of *empressement* which in most would have been unpleasant but which in his case seemed absolutely natural. He said strange things in a grave voice and with a perfectly serious countenance, and during the first few weeks of their acquaintance Phillip never knew for certain when the other was in earnest. Sometimes he took his cue from Chester and echoed that youth's laughter, but more often he made use of a happy compromise and smiled wisely, as one to whom sad experience had taught the futility of either laughter or seriousness. And Guy, perceiving the other's predicament, excelled himself in the utterance of extravagances.

Phillip had acknowledged cheerfully his ignorance of all save the rudiments of football, and Guy had nodded commendingly.

"I think you'll make a success at it," he said gravely. "I only wish I had your ignorance of the game."

"Why," exclaimed Phillip, "I should think that ignorance was something of a drawback to a fellow."

"Yes, that's the popular impression, but, like most popular impressions, it's quite erroneous. It is ignorance that wins every time. Take your own

case for example. You know no more of the game than you have learned from seeing it played on three occasions. You are free from prejudices; you do not insist that the ball must be handled in a certain way. It makes no difference to you whether the quarter holds it with a stiff hand or a loose one, whether he has the belly of the ball or the end. You haven't played the game until you've got yourself into a rut hemmed in by customs and precedents. Consequently, if left to your own devices you will play the game naturally. If it comes easier to you to kick the ball with your heel than with your toe, you'll do it. If you think you can obtain better results by tackling the referee instead of the runner, you'll do that. Your mind, so far as the game of football is concerned, is virgin. You learn the game naturally, as a child learns to talk. You will not be restricted by rules, regulations or customs; and so who knows but that you'll improve on the present methods?"

Phillip smiled doubtfully and shot a glance at the speaker's face. But Guy was looking straight ahead, thoughtfully serious, as though enjoying a vision of a gridiron contest in which the players, emancipated from the iron heel of the despotic

coach, were battling each as his natural impulse taught. Chester was grinning; but then he generally was grinning, thought Phillip.

"But there would always have to be rules, wouldn't there?" he asked.

"Not at all," answered Guy calmly. "Rules are laws; laws are unnatural mandates invented by man to govern the conduct of persons whose conscionable impulses have been so thwarted that they no longer have the power to influence."

Chester gurgled rapturously.

"In football," continued Guy, "there is a rule which prohibits a player from throttling his opponent or striking him with his fist. Now where is the advantage of that rule? It very often happens—I know that it has in my case, at all events—that a player can put his opponent out of the play more speedily and certainly by striking him forcibly between the eyes with the fist than by pushing him to one side. The natural impulse is to do so. Then why not do it?"

"But—but——" Phillip stuttered in his amazement. "But that would be brutal! You might—might injure the other fellow."

"Certainly; I believe that if done scientifically

and with sufficient force it would kill him. And there we are again. The natural impulse is to kill enough of the opposing team to enable you to win the game. The object of the game is to win. The surest way to win is to kill off the other team as fast as possible. But there the very persons who should do all in their power to advance the sport step in with a foolish, contradictory rule prohibiting you from slaying your man in any save one or two almost impossible methods. Any one who has played football at all knows that you can't kill your opponent by throwing him or by pawing him on the chest with the open hand. It's the dreariest nonsense! Consider the one or two real killings that football history shows. In each case the deed has been done either by stamping the fellow's brains out or jumping onto his spinal column so as to break his neck, or in some way that the idiotic rules prohibit. Rules! Why, they're the very things that are retarding the true development of the game."

"Oh, shut up, Guy!" sputtered Chester. Phillip laughed uncertainly. Of course Bassett was only fooling, but he did it with such a straight face, thought Phillip, that any one might be deceived.

They turned in at the Newell Gate and followed the path around the Locker Building. The field was already well dotted with fellows; it looked to Phillip as though every man who could beg, buy or borrow a pair of football trousers had turned out.

"Think over what I've said," pleaded Guy, as they approached the group of waiting candidates for the freshman team. "You've got the making of a great football player, Ryerson; you start in with the most valuable asset of all, ignorance. Be true to your impulses and resist to the last drop of blood in your veins the coercion of narrow-minded, hide-bound, bigoted coaches and captains. You have a great future before you, my boy. Remain true to yourself, and Chester and I will look back to this day in which we were privileged to know you ere you were discovered to fame as the proudest day of our lives."

A half-hour later Phillip had begun to doubt whether he was destined to cut such a wide swath in the football landscape as he had believed. His opinion of his prowess had shrunk to such modest dimensions that he was ready to acquit Chester of all such designs on him as he had momentarily

suspected him of. And, moreover, he was rather glad that he had not attempted the 'varsity team, as he had at first intended doing. Physical fatigue is conducive to self-disparagement, and Phillip ached in all the bones that he had known himself the possessor of and in several the presence of which inside his anatomy came to him as a startling and painful surprise.

He had taken part, together with some half-hundred other hopefuls, in a number of strange exercises. First the candidates had been lined up on the thirty-yard mark and, at the flourish of the coach's cap, had raced frantically at top speed to the goal line. This had been repeated exactly five times, and at the end of the last dash Phillip sank down onto the turf and hung his tongue out. Falling on the ball, in all its variations, had followed. As Phillip had never attempted the feat before, his success was negative, judged from the coach's standpoint, but really wonderful in other ways. He found it very thrilling and was ready to believe that as an exercise it was far ahead of any method he had tried. Punting succeeded falling on the ball, and from this he would have extracted not a little enjoyment had it not been that it hurt him terribly every

time he lifted his foot into the air. At last practice was over for that day and he wandered out of the crowd looking rather dejected. He had given his name and had been instructed to report the next afternoon at the same time. But anticipation of the next day's proceedings occasioned him no delight, and he wondered whether second-hand football togs, worn only once, had any market value.

Chester and Guy discovered him and dragged him across to the 'varsity gridiron, in spite of his emphatic requests to be allowed to go home and study.

"Study?" cried Chester. "How you do talk! What, in the name of all that's sensible, do you want to grind on a nice afternoon like this for? Come on; we'll go over and sit on the seats and criticize the 'varsity chaps. How did you get on?"

"Not very well, I reckon," answered Phillip. "I couldn't get the hang of falling on the ball, and when I tried to kick my legs ached so I couldn't. In fact, I ache mighty near all over."

Chester grinned and Guy raised his eyebrows in polite surprise. "You'll feel better to-morrow," assured the former, and the latter murmured: "'Tis sweet to die for one's class."

Beyond the fence the 'varsity candidates were

punting and catching and jogging about the field in little groups that paused for a moment over the ball and, at the signal, shot forward as though about to tear down the gridiron, but who instead suddenly appeared to change their minds and paused, took breath and did it all over again. There were five coaches present, and each took his turn at interrupting the captain, who was instructing an assortment of backs in the art of getting down under kicks.

Phillip seated himself beside his companions on the little bench by the jumping standard and stretched his tired legs before him with a sigh of luxurious content. The scene interested and pleased him. The grass was still green, the white clouds floated lazily overhead, the river was blue with queer bronze ripples, and the breeze that stirred the damp hair over his forehead was fresh and invigourating. For a time he divided his attention between the doings of the crimson-stockinged candidates and the conversation of the two beside him. But presently his thoughts wandered off into a series of veritable day-dreams. Very pleasant dreams they were, in which he saw himself successful and popular, and heard the plaudits of the admiring

multitude. Just what variety of college fame he had won did not appear; but whatever it was it was extremely satisfying, and Phillip saw himself bowing before the storm of approval with a nice mixture of pride and modesty. They were calling his name wildly, enthusiastically:

“Ryerson! Ryerson! Ryer——!”

He opened his eyes and sat up with a start. Chester was shaking him by the neck and laughing.

“Wake up, you sleepy cuss, and answer to your name!”

“I—I don’t think I was asleep,” murmured Phillip.

“Well, you’ve got another think. I was telling Guy that I met the famous John North last night. Laurence took me over to his room in Little’s. I told him about you and he says he’s called on you.”

“Called on me?” repeated Phillip. “Did he say when? I reckon I was out. I’m sorry.”

“Why, that’s the funny part of it,” answered Chester. “I said I’d met you, and he asked kind of dryly whether I’d found you belligerent. I told him no, and said that you’d spoken of expecting a call from him. He said he had called and that you and he had had a very interesting talk. He looked so

darned queer, though, that I thought maybe he was stringing me."

Phillip looked puzzled for an instant; then a great dismay overspread his countenance and he gripped Chester by the arm.

"What does he look like?" he cried.

"Why, he—— Say, what is this—melodrama?"

"No, no; go on. Tell me!"

"Give me the chee-ild!" exclaimed Chester, tragically. Then, observing Phillip's expression of anxiety, he went on soberly: "He's about six foot tall, I guess; about three foot broad; he has—— Why, hang it, there he is, crossing the field—the fellow talking with the head coach; see?"

Phillip followed the other's gaze and his heart sank.

"That—that's not John North!" he faltered.

"You're a liar," answered Chester sweetly. Phillip groaned.

"Why, that's—that's——"

Guy leaned over and patted him reassuringly on the back.

"Hold hard, old man; don't give way to it. Give him air, men; stand back everybody!"

"You were about to observe?" asked Chester.

"Nothing." Phillip sat with flushed cheeks and watched the approach of his caller of Wednesday, praying that the latter would not come near enough to see him. But John, in earnest conversation with the head coach, came straight on toward the bench and only paused when the edge of the running track was reached. Phillip sank back and tried to make himself smaller. Chester observed him with interest and curiosity. John talked for a minute, his back toward the three, and then, apparently in explanation of the subject under discussion, took the head coach by the shoulders and swung him slowly to the left. The head coach nodded and John glanced up and caught sight of the trio on the bench. His gaze swept over them and he nodded smilingly, his eyes upon Chester.

"How are you?" responded that youth.

Phillip, his cheeks on fire, wondered miserably whether the senior had recognized him as the "very fresh little boy" who had ordered him out of the room. He shot quick glances to left and right with the half-formulated idea of sneaking out of sight. What, he asked himself, must North think of him?

"Come over and I'll introduce you," said Chester,

starting up. But Phillip dragged him back onto the seat.

"No, please! Not now!" he begged.

"Why not?"

"Because—— There, he's going!" North and the head coach turned and strode off to a group of players. "I reckon I'll go back now," said Phillip.

"Well, I guess it's time," answered Chester. "The mosquitoes are getting plaguey familiar with my neck. Coming, Guy?"

When they reached the bridge the river had changed its hue. It was the colour of steel now, shot with ripples of lemon yellow. Across the stream and to the left the windows of the University Press were aflame with the rays of the sinking sun, and the lights along Charles River Road were pale yellow pin-points. The sound of oarlocks caught their ears and they paused and leaned over the rail. A crew was swinging its way up stream, the eight backs rising and falling in unison. The shell shot under the bridge, followed an instant later by the launch. At the bow of the latter the coach knelt on one knee, crimson megaphone at mouth, shouting unintelligible things. In the wake the waves lapped the shingle softly. Off the university boat-

house the rowers ceased and let the shell run, turning widely through the darkening water, followed by the puffing launch. Phillip drew a long breath. He wanted to quote poetry but could think of nothing.

Guy hummed softly.

Chester lighted a cigarette.

"That was Laurence at Four," he said.

Farther on Phillip turned and remarked in the manner of one who has reached a conclusion after long deliberation:

"I think I should like to row."

Chester laughed; Guy, however, nodded approvingly.

"Your ambition does you credit," he said gravely.

"'Aim high and fall soft' is an excellent motto."

Phillip wondered what he meant.

Among John North's mail the next morning was a letter which he read twice and then handed to David. It was signed Phillip Scott Ryerson, and had occasioned the writer much thought, many sheets of paper and some two hours to compose. It was as follows:

"DEAR MR. NORTH:

"I hardly know how to approach the subject upon

which I wish to address you. Please believe that the whole thing was a most unfortunate mistake. I allude to the call you were so kind as to pay me on Wednesday afternoon last. I did not know who you were. You will say that that was no one's fault but my own, and you are right. And even as it was, not knowing who you were and believing you to be a proctor, I had no right to act in such an impolite" (the word was erased) "ungentlemanly manner. The only excuse I have to offer is that I was much out of temper when you called owing to a dispute, part of which you witnessed, with an expressman who wanted to overcharge me for bringing my baggage from the city and placing it in my rooms.

"I had looked forward with great pleasure to meeting you, especially since my mother and Mr. Corliss had hoped so much of my being acquainted with you during my freshman year, and cannot tell you how sorry I am that I should have received you so rudely, even though, as I *do* hope you will believe, I did not know who you were when you called. I hope you will accept my apology and, if you can, forgive my rudeness. I have no right to ask you to call again, but if you can forget

what happened on Wednesday last I wish you would allow me to see you. I only know two fellows here and have thought of you as a friend all along, hearing Mr. Corliss speak of you, and my mother having been so pleased at the idea of my meeting you, and hope you will overlook my discourtesy of last Wednesday.

"Hoping to have a reply from you, and with earnest apologies,

"Respectfully,

"PHILLIP SCOTT RYERSON."

David handed back the letter with a grunt and looked up at John.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well?" echoed John.

"Oh, if you ask me, I think you'd better forgive and forget."

"That of course," replied the other. "The fact is, Davy, I made up my mind yesterday to look him up again. After all, it wasn't altogether the boy's fault. And the weather Wednesday was beastly. But what do you think of the epistle?"

"Why, it sounds sincere, Johnnie, in spite of a certain—er—involution."

"Yes; I believe the boy's the right sort after all,

Davy. Who knows but what we'll be able to do something with him yet?"

"*We!*"

"I meant to say I."

"I wish," growled David severely, "that you would break yourself, Johnnie, of the growing habit of seeking to involve me in your kindergarten duties and difficulties. I have troubles of my own."

"Well, anyhow," remarked John, as he picked up a book and pulled his cap on, "I'm glad that I'd decided to try him again before the letter came. It eases my conscience."

"Your what?" gasped David.

"Conscience. Wait until you get into the foster-mother business, Davy, and you'll develop one yourself. And besides, there's not only the boy to think of, but—Margaret."

"Who's Margaret?" asked David suspiciously.

"That, my friend," replied John amiably, as he passed out, "is none of your business."

CHAPTER V

JOHN NORTH was one of the busiest men in college. He was taking all the studies that he could manage, was a member of nine clubs and held office in four of them, as head of a club table was responsible for the dietary welfare of ten gluttonous seniors, and had now undertaken the duties of a football coach. But the time and trouble entailed by the latter position he did not begrudge. He had played football for three seasons, and he realized that to withdraw entirely from gridiron affairs and hope to be contented was out of the question. Therefore he was glad of the opportunity afforded him as an assistant coach to keep in touch with the sport and to be of assistance to the association, without, however, being required to give all his time to the game.

Phillip's letter reached him Saturday morning, but, what with one duty and another, it was Sunday afternoon before he found opportunity to pay his second call on that penitent. David flatly refused to accompany him, and so, shortly after lunch, he

set forth alone. The front door was open and the drab-hued house was filled with the depressing silence of a New England Sabbath. Or so it appeared until John had mounted the stairs and had reached the hall above. Then he paused and listened with a perplexed frown. From behind the door of Phillip's study came sounds not dissimilar to those which had greeted him on the occasion of his previous visit—the sound of tramping, of a chair overturned, with now and then a shout.

“Great Scott!” muttered John, “he’s at it again!”

But this time his knock brought a more hospitable response and he entered upon a different scene. Phillip, coatless, disheveled, panting, stared at him from one end of the room, while at the other a black-and-white setter dropped the glove it had held in its mouth and observed him with a merry and inquiring eye. Phillip, recognizing the caller, coloured during a moment of hesitation, and then advanced to meet him.

“Good-evening, sir. It’s very kind of you to call,” he said with some embarrassment.

“Not at all,” answered John. They shook hands. “I got your note yesterday morning and would have been around before, but couldn’t find a moment to

spare. The fact is, Ryerson, I was going to come, anyhow, before I heard from you. It was awfully idiotic of me to lose my temper the other day; I'm not usually so crabbed. I think it must have been the weather."

"It's good of you to put it that way," said Phillip, "but of course it was all my fault. I'm very sorry about it, honestly, and——"

"Nonsense," interrupted John. "Let's forget the whole silly affair and start fresh. I hope we'll become good friends, Ryerson, and I shall be very glad to do anything I can for you. George Corliss, who wrote to me about you, is an old friend of the family and a chap I owe several favours to; a thoroughly good fellow all through. Have you known him long?"

"Ever since I can remember," answered Phillip. "He and father knew each other very well. I think they were related very distantly. Since father's death he has been mighty good to us and has taken a heap of trouble."

John had seated himself in a comfortable Morris chair that still smelled of the factory, and now he examined the room with interest and some surprise. Plainly his new acquaintance didn't intend to deny

himself comforts. The apartment was filled with new furnishings, most of which, as John surmised, had probably been expensive. There were even new pictures on the walls and new drapings at the windows and at the door into the bedroom beyond. He tried to reconcile this with what Corliss had written him in regard to the family's financial condition and was puzzled.

"You have very comfortable quarters here," he said. "I like these old-fashioned rooms with the overhead beams and the deep-set windows. They're so quiet and restful and homelike. Some of the new dormitories are wonders, but I doubt if shower-baths and swimming-tanks and reading-rooms and all the rest of the modern conveniences quite make up for the atmosphere that you miss."

"I'd like to see some of those places you speak of," said Phillip. "I reckon they must be mighty fine."

"They are. Some evening we'll go around and call on some sybarites of my acquaintance in Westmorley and Claverly. There's Pete Broom, for instance; he and another chap have three rooms and a bath, with hot water heat and telephone service and porcelain tubs and Heaven only knows

what else! It's all very beautiful and stupendous, but the idea of wearing ordinary clothes and smoking a pipe there is absolutely incongruous. Why, they ought to drape themselves in purple and gold and fine linen and sit all day on silken cushions. No, something of this sort suits me better. I like a room where the paint's scraped off in places and where the window catches don't always catch and where you feel that some one has lived before you and gone through what you're going through. But then it's all a matter of taste, of course."

"I reckon so," answered Phillip. "I tried to get rooms in the house where my father lived when he was here, but they were all taken. So I came here. I like this very much so far."

"So your father was a Harvard man?" asked John.

"Yes; class of '67. He left college when the war broke out and served in the army—the Southern army, you know." John nodded. "Then after it was over he came back and finished college. He married three days after he graduated, but his wife died less than a year later. And he didn't marry again until he was nearly forty. Mamma says Margey and I came mighty near not being born, because

she refused my father three times before she finally gave in."

"Your father was persevering," laughed John. "Margey is your sister? Have you any brothers?"

"No, there's just Margey and me. Margey is two years older than I."

"And how old are you?"

"Nineteen last June. I—I reckon you're a good deal more than that?"

"Twenty-four," answered John. "I understood from Corliss that your mother is somewhat of an invalid."

"Yes, she's never been right well since I can remember. And since father died she has been a good deal worse, I fear."

"I can understand that," answered John. "And of course the care of such a big place as—Elaine, is it?—must be hard on her."

"Well, she doesn't have much to do with it. Margey has always looked after things ever since she was big enough. She's got lots of sense, has Margey. And then there's the overseer; he's been with us for about twenty years, I reckon."

"I see." John felt something cold against his

hand and looked down to find the setter beside him.

"Hello, what's your name?"

"Her name's Tudor Maid," answered Phillip. "She's out of Valley Maid by Tudor Prince, and one of the finest bird dogs in Virginia. She's getting pretty old, though, now; she's eleven. I just couldn't bear to give her up and so I brought her along with me. She's having a mighty dull time of it, though, I reckon; aren't you, girl? I take her out for walks whenever I can, but somehow I don't seem to be able to find much time for walking."

"Well, what do you say to taking a tramp now?" asked John. "It's a fine afternoon and I usually try to get out on Sunday; and it'll give the dog a run."

"I should like to go very much," answered Phillip eagerly. "That is, if—if you weren't going with some one else?"

"No, I thought perhaps I could entice you along. Get your cap." He arose and, while Phillip was putting on his coat and finding hat and gloves, strolled over to the mantel. Above it was a nice arrangement of spurs, crops, whips and bridles centering about a really good hunting picture. But John wasn't looking for such things; instead he examined attentively the long row of photographs

that lined the wall beneath and which he had noticed from his chair. There were two portraits of a middle-aged gentleman whom John surmised to be the Phillip Ryerson who had fought in the duel; another of the same person, taken at an earlier age, in the dress of a Southern captain of cavalry; a portrait of a sweet-faced, rather delicate woman of about fifty; an assortment of photographs of more or less uninteresting looking persons of both sexes; and then one which John took from its place and observed intently, while a little smile curved his lips. He was still looking at it when Phillip returned from the bedroom attired for the walk.

"Who's this, Ryerson?" he asked.

"That's Margey—my sister, you know. It's not good of her."

"You look alike, all of you," said John, returning the picture slowly to its place. "You're a good-looking lot, you Ryersons."

"They say my mother was the handsomest woman in our county when she married," answered Phillip with pride. "And father was handsome, too, I think. But Margey and I aren't much on looks; I reckon we're just powerful good," he added, laughing.

"Well, I won't throw compliments at you," said

John, "but your sister's a beauty, in my opinion. All ready?"

They descended the stairs, preceded by Tudor Maid, who took the flight in four hilarious bounds and waited for them at the gate wriggling from nose to tail with delight. It was an ideal autumn day, with a clear sky and just enough breeze to bring the golden and bronze and crimson leaves fluttering down from the trees that lined Mount Auburn Street, and enough sparkle in the air to lend spring to the tread of the two as they paced briskly along. John was a veritable bureau of information, and Phillip had a boy's healthy curiosity regarding everything that hinted of interest. In front of Longfellow Park they crossed the little border of turf and shrubbery and stood upon a narrow beach left by the receding tide. Phillip tossed bits of stone into the river and Maid barked wildly and was always on the point of plunging in after them, but never did. To their right the stream began its long curve, its surface agleam with flecks and points of sunlight that dazzled the eyes. Across, the broad meadow stretched before them, a bare expanse of golden russet. Beyond that was the river again, and then the wooded promontory crowned with its

tower and sprinkled with marble monuments that glistened snow-white in the sunlight.

"That's the cemetery, isn't it?" asked Phillip.

"Yes, Mount Auburn. If Davy was with us—Davy's my roommate—he'd drag us up there and lead us about amongst tombstones and vaults and be utterly happy. When Davy visits Mount Auburn I know that he is feeling unusually cheerful. I don't trust him up there alone any more, though, because he went one day last spring and fell asleep on somebody's grave and came near being arrested. It got into the papers and we called him The Ghoul for some time. The *Traveler* got hold of it and printed a funny story of it with a startling heading in big, black letters; 'Harvard Student's Grave Offense.' I don't believe Davy has been up there since."

They left the river and passed upward through the park to Brattle Street, Phillip turning again and again for another view of the winding river.

"Cambridge is beautiful, isn't it?" he asked softly.

"Yes, I think so," answered John, "although there are those who pretend to think otherwise. At least, it is full of beautiful spots, and one can forgive

the squalidness of other portions of the city because of them. To my mind Brattle Street is one of the loveliest streets in the world, and it's never as lovely as it is at this season."

They crossed the road and peered in through the gate at the poet's house, and John, in the rôle of guide, recited the customary catalogue of dates and facts.

"I shan't repeat 'The Day is Done,' however," he said, "although it is really the proper thing to do. I wonder how many persons have stood here and murmured soulfully!

"'I see the lights of the village

Break through the rain and the mist.'"

"But that isn't right!" protested Phillip. And so he recited the poem himself, prompted here and there by John, and ended to find the latter observing him quizzically.

"One more, Ryerson," he said. "Don't blush; you did it well, with just the right amount of repressed feeling. And besides, you couldn't help it; everybody does it; it's a—a sort of fatality. I went by here one day and found five Radcliffe girls murmuring it in unison, their eyes fixed mournfully upon the river and meadow."

But Phillip was embarrassed by the other's good-natured raillery and turned away and stared at the dignified old mansion sunning its well-preserved timbers up there on the terrace. Presently he said with something of awe in his voice:

"Just think! Washington himself may have walked down this graveled path and through this gate!"

"Yes," answered John, "he probably did. I've always thought I'd like to have known Washington. I don't believe he was the straight-laced old prig that the school histories try to make out. Between you and me, Ryerson, I fancy he was a regular old sport. Look at the way he could swear! Why, he could give cards and spades to a Nantucket skipper! The only really reprehensible thing that I can lay at his door," continued John, as they turned and took up their walk, "is the way in which he established headquarters. I believe that if it hadn't been for that weakness of his we'd have licked England long before we did. Consider the time he must have wasted. He was as bad as that old English queen—was it Bess?—that used to go through the country sleeping in people's beds for them."

"There are a lot of Washington's headquarters," acknowledged Phillip.

"I should say so. I can imagine the *Trenton Patriot* coming out with something like this: 'Word has been received from Philadelphia that Gen. George Washington will arrive in our midst on Thursday of next week for the purpose of establishing headquarters here. It will be a gala occasion in the history of our prosperous town and it is anticipated that all patriotic citizens for miles around will attend. The Stage Line will make extra trips and has offered a special rate of one and one-third regular fare. During the afternoon the ladies of the Front Street Methodist Church will serve refreshments in the old Armory Building on Main Street. Come one, come all.'"

Phillip laughed, but doubtfully; John's humour seemed to him to smack of irreverence.

"George Washington," summed up John, "was the Andrew Carnegie of his day."

"He was a great man," said Phillip, his loyalty to the Greatest Virginian overcoming his awe of his companion.

"He was indeed," answered John, realizing that Phillip's sense of humour did not extend to sacred

ground. "He was great and good and human, and that's a combination of virtues that you don't often find. I know of only one other American who approached him in goodness and humanity, while perhaps lacking his greatness."

Phillip looked an inquiry.

"And that was Lincoln," said John.

"Oh." Phillip dropped his gaze gravely to the ground. John observed him smilingly.

"You're still a bit of a rebel, eh, Ryerson?"

"I reckon so," answered Phillip. "But I've heard my father say that Abraham Lincoln was a good man and a brave one, and that if he could have had his way the North and South would never have gone to war. But you can't hardly expect us to—to think about Lincoln just the way you do up here, can you?"

"No," answered John gravely. "Only don't be behind us in forgiveness, Ryerson."

"Do you think we are?" asked Phillip in surprise.

"A little, maybe."

"But, sir, we lost!"

"True."

"And not only that," continued Phillip earnestly, "but we suffered the most. The war left us almost

ruined and mighty discouraged. I reckon if we had it to do over we'd do it differently; I mean we'd look things in the face and get down to work without wasting time in regretting. But then we didn't know how; we had never been taught to do things for ourselves, you know. You took our labourers away from us and made them think they didn't need to do a thing. And farms just went to ruin, and farmers with them. It was mighty hard, sir!" He paused and looked with sudden shyness at John. "Anyhow, that's what my father used to say."

"And he was just about right," John concurred. "Well, it was a miserable business, Ryerson, but it had to come; at least, that's what *my* father says," he added smilingly. "By the way, 'Ryerson's' a bit formal, and I think I'll call you Phillip if you don't mind."

"I'd rather you called me Phil; most everybody does."

"All right. And my name's John, but never Jack. I've always detested 'Jack' for some reason or other. And if you can manage to leave out the 'sir' I'd like it better."

"I'll try," laughed Phillip. "It's a way we have in the South, you know; we always say 'sir' and

'ma'am.' If I'd ever addressed father without the 'sir' I reckon he'd have worn me out."

"I see. The objection I make to it," answered John, "is that it makes me feel like a grandfather. Now if you know anything of Lowell's, here's your chance," he added, as they halted at the old fence surrounding Elmwood. But Phillip refused to recite any more, and after viewing the tree-embowered house they turned their steps homeward, followed by Maid with hanging tongue. On the walk back the conversation turned on more practical matters. John advised Phillip as to a boarding-place and in other affairs which had puzzled the freshman.

"I think one ought to have an athletic interest of some kind," said Phillip. "What would you advise?"

"How about football?" asked John, running his eye over the other's wiry frame. But Phillip shook his head dolefully.

"I've tried that, but I'm no good. I went out for the freshman team and yesterday after practice they told me I was in Squad E, and Chester Baker says I might as well be in the river."

"That's not promising," said John. "You'd better join one of the scrub teams and get used to the game that way. Then next year you'll stand

more of a chance. And if I were you I'd go over to the gym pretty regularly and use the chest weights; you look as though you'd stand rather more development in the upper part of the body than you've got. Have you ever tried running?"

Phillip shook his head.

"You might go in for that; any fellow that can show speed and staying power has a good chance to distinguish himself."

"I think I'd like to row," hazarded Phillip.

"You'll have to develop your muscles a bit first. Join a class, Phil, and keep at it; it will do you a lot of good even if it doesn't get you a place in a boat. But there's no hurry about athletics; you've got four years ahead of you; you'll find what you're looking for after a bit."

"And there's another thing," said Phillip. "Chester and Guy Bassett and all the fellows I've met belong to clubs."

"Well, join the Union; that's enough for awhile. Later you had better get into the Southern Club. The fact is, Phil, clubs are expensive things, and unless you really feel the need of them you'd much better save your money. As for the best ones, the ones that count, there's no way of breaking into

them; you've got to qualify, as it were; they come to you if they want you."

"And—and one more thing," said Phillip, after a moment of hesitation.

"Fire away," replied John cheerfully.

"Thank you. Last night I went into a theatre with Chester Baker and Guy Bassett and two other fellows. Well, Chester asked if I wanted to go and I said yes, and he said he'd get a ticket for me; and he did. Now, what I want to know is, did he mean that I was to pay for my ticket or was it his treat?"

"Well," laughed John, "I'm hanged if I know. But a pretty good rule to follow is, pay your own way."

"And if Chester really meant that I was his guest would he be offended if I offered to pay him for the ticket?" asked Phillip anxiously.

John's face showed a glimmer of amusement as he answered soberly: "I don't think he would, Phil. On the whole, I believe I'd make the offer."

"Thank you. I will," he answered simply. They had turned into Garden Street, and now John pointed dramatically to a decrepit elm tree that stood, shorn of most of its branches, within a little iron-fenced enclosure.

“ ‘Under this tree Washington took command—’ ”

But Phillip had already left him and was reading the inscription on the stone tablet with devoted eyes. Then he looked upward at the once sturdy monarch and about him as though impressing the scene upon his memory.

“I want to write Margey about it,” he explained as John joined him.

“I see.” John’s eyes followed Phillip’s, and the scene, to his surprise, took on new values. He began to wonder how, if he were going to write Margey, he would describe it. Really, it was an interesting old stump when you came to think about it. He wondered if Phillip would tell his sister of the walk they had taken and whether his name would be mentioned; and if it was, what sort of a person Margey would imagine him to be. He recalled the features in the photograph on Phil’s mantel and hoped that that youngster’s account of him would be the least bit flattering.

It was almost five when they reached the church opposite the college and John turned to Phillip with:

“I say, come on over to my room and meet Davy. He’s probably asleep, but we can wake him up. And

then I'll take you to dinner and you can see how you like the place."

That programme was duly followed—even to the merciless waking of David—and Phillip only parted from his new friends when a clock in a nearby tower tolled nine. Then he walked through Boylston Street to his room feeling very happy, Maid, now a quiet and sedate old lady, following close at his heels.

CHAPTER VI

PHILLIP struggled into an old coat, performed Maid's toilet—removed her collar and rubbed her neck—and took up a book. But study didn't appeal to him, and presently he turned the volume face down in his lap, stretched his legs in front of him, clasped his hands back of his head and reviewed the evening. For the first time since he had reached Cambridge he felt that he really belonged there; that he was a part of the college. Yesterday he had been a separate atom circling around the outer rim of things, occasionally touching other atoms for a space, only to be borne off again. To-day he had suddenly been drawn into the vortex; had jostled and overlapped others of his kind, and had, in fact, become a particle in the coherent body. He was sensible of a certain elation that bordered on excitement; he wanted to tell some one about it. To that end he lighted a pipe, seated himself at the table, drew paper and ink to him and wrote steadily for an hour. The letter was inscribed, "Dear Little

Mamma and Margey," and in it he set forth all that had happened since his last writing on Friday. He told of the theatre party of the previous evening, of attending church that morning, and then of John North's appearance on the scene and their walk.

"I wish you could see North," he wrote. "He's a fine fellow every way. He's over six feet high, I reckon, with very broad shoulders. I feel pretty small alongside him. But of course it isn't his size that makes you like him so right away, though I reckon that has something to do with it, but the way he looks and what he says and the way he does things. I can't explain just what I mean, although I know myself. He's mighty good-looking; awfully manly and honest; that kind of handsome, you know. He has nice dark eyes that always seem as though they were smiling at you, and a straight nose and a square chin that makes you feel that you wouldn't care to have him right angry at you. He has a funny, quiet way of talking, and you can't help feeling that if you were in a fix he's just the fellow you'd like to have come along. And of course he's awfully smart, only he isn't the sort of man that tries to make you know it. That's where he's different from Guy Bassett. He's not as handsome

as Bassett, but you like his looks better somehow.

“Talking about looks, mamma, he saw your photograph and those of father on my mantel when he was here, and Margey’s, too. He said ‘we Ryersons’ were a good-looking lot and—but Margey mustn’t see this or she’ll get conceited—that my sister was a beauty. It sounds kind of cheeky, but it really wasn’t, the way he said it.”

Phillip described the walk to the extent of three pages and promised to send a book of views which showed some of the places they had seen. Then,

“I met his roommate, David Meadowcamp; isn’t it a funny name? He’s almost as funny as his name, too. But he was awfully nice, as I was sure he would be if he was North’s friend. He was all sprawled out on a Turkish couch thing when we went in and North woke him up and introduced me. I was a bit uncomfortable at the queer way he looked me over, just as though I were a horse he was thinking of buying, but he shook hands and was very pleasant and kind.

“He and North had a sort of ‘scrap,’ as they say here, just in fun, you know. I didn’t understand what it was about exactly, but I had to laugh to

see them falling over the chairs and things, for Meadowcamp is just about as big as John North and heavier, I reckon. Meadowcamp told North that he had seen an article in the Sunday paper on the care and feeding of infants, or something like that, and that he had cut it out and saved it for him to read, and North looked kind of queer and threw a book at Meadowcamp and then they had it, and Meadowcamp finally got North back of the couch and sat on him and made him make all kind of funny speeches of apology, and made him apologize to me for 'misbehaving in the presence of an honoured guest.'

"They have splendid rooms and the study is full of jolly things to look at. The walls are just covered all over with rugs and pictures and there are book-cases that come half-way up them filled with expensive books. And North said I was to help myself whenever I wanted. He showed me the pictures when he found I was staring at them, and said that a lot of them were originals by a fellow named Remington who does Indian drawings in the magazines. They were great. And there were a lot of water-colours and oil paintings and a lot of steins—those German beer mugs, you know—hanging on

hooks. And I counted fifteen 'shingles,' too. A shingle is a framed paper, like the diplomas, saying that you belong to a club or society. They must belong to a lot.

"They took me to dinner at their boarding-place which is called The Inn. North said that some of the fellows at their club table weren't there because it was Sunday. Some go home if they live near here. There were eight of us at table and I was introduced to every one. They are all seniors and so of course I felt rather young and insignificant at first. But everybody acted just as if I was one of them and after awhile I forget about being a freshman and talked back. North told them that I was from Virginia and was in college preparing for the Presidency, and Meadowcamp asked me to make him Secretary of State when I was elected, and that started them to forming a cabinet. North wanted to be Secretary of Agriculture because it was a nice, restful position, but Meadowcamp said no, they would have a new portfolio and make him Secretary of Education. North seemed to think that was very funny and so did everybody else, but of course I didn't know what the joke was. We had a fine dinner and the walk had made me hungry and I ate

like a woodchopper. North says I should go to The Inn and join a general table there. I think I will, because the place that Chester Baker recommended is much more expensive and I just can't stand the restaurants any longer. I had two helpings of beef and two of rice and two of pudding. And after dinner we sat around a long while and smoked and talked about football and theatres and lots of things that I didn't know much about. When the fellows said good night they most all asked me to come and see them. I asked North if he thought they really meant it and he said they did and that I should go. And so I reckon I'll have to, although I'm a bit scared.

"When we went back to Little's—that's where North and Meadowcamp room—we pulled easy-chairs up together and North put a little table with pipes and cigars and tobacco in the middle and we smoked and talked some more. North said I was to talk fast so as to keep Davy—that's Meadowcamp—awake. They asked me a lot about Virginia and Elaine, and I told them about the horses and the fox hunts, and Meadowcamp says he is going to come down and spend the summer with me. But of course that was just a joke. And I

am to be sure and always go to their room every Sunday night and whenever else I have time. And North is going to see about my getting board at The Inn. It is six dollars a week, but he says you can't get good food in Cambridge for any less, unless you go to Memorial or Randall, and that if I go there I'll end by starving to death.

"I said good-night at nine o'clock and came back to my room. North said I mustn't go so early, but I noticed that Meadowcamp was nodding and reckoned he wanted to get to bed. Maid had a fine time to-day when we went to walk and chased sparrows and things all the time. Cambridge is beautiful now and the leaves are beginning to fall. I wish you and Margey could see how lovely it is. But I get kind of homesick sometimes for you all and Elaine. Please tell Bob to ride Ruby twice a week and to look after her feet well. I will write again soon. With heaps of love,

"PHIL."

Phillip found his days fully occupied. He attended chapel every morning, at first from a sense of duty, but afterward because he liked it and felt somehow better prepared for what the day was to bring. One morning he encountered Guy Bassett on

the steps and gave voice to the surprise he looked:

“Good-morning; I didn’t expect——” He paused confusedly. Guy smiled.

“Didn’t expect to see me here?” he asked. “I fear you’re a Pharisee, Ryerson. I’m usually at prayers. I find it rather interesting; not exciting, you understand, but mildly interesting. And then, I think I’m better for it all the rest of the day.”

“Yes,” said Phillip, “so do I.”

“I’ve paced it off and have found that the distance from my room to chapel and from chapel to my boarding house is just over the half-mile. Half a mile is about the proper distance for a morning walk. I tried going to the Common and back at first, but as that involved viewing that extremely hideous soldiers’ monument I had to give it up. After that the chapel was really the only objective point that was the right distance. Besides, I fancy it lends one a certain amount of distinction.”

When Phillip, in the course of a conversation with Chester, incidentally mentioned having been to morning prayers, the latter was genuinely astonished.

“But you have to get up so early !” he exclaimed.

"And then I should think you'd feel frightfully lonely."

"Well, seeing that the place is generally pretty well filled——"

"Really? I shall have to try it some morning when I can't sleep."

"Bloody Monday Night" was a dire disappointment to Phillip. After marching about the yard arm in arm with Chester and Guy for the better part of half an hour, cheering defiantly for his class, the subsequent shoving and jostling, in which the most glorious thing that befell him was the loss of his cap, was distinctly unsatisfying. He went home feeling rather aggrieved, in the mood of one who has seen an ideal shattered.

There was another visit to the theatre about this time. He and Chester witnessed the performance of a sensational melodrama, which Chester subsequently re-enacted for his benefit on the platform of the Boylston Street Station of the subway, to the intense interest of several score of dignified citizens of Cambridge and the Back Bay. Phillip paid his half of the expenses without questioning, having discovered that Chester's theatre parties were invariably Dutch treats. And about the same

time Phillip awoke to the fact that there was a well-developed skeleton in his closet which, for want of a better name, might have been called Pecuniary Embarrassment. Expenses came thick and fast. He purchased a new suit of brown tweed cut in the prevailing mode, with a short jacket having a stunning plait and belt, and a pair of trousers surprisingly generous at the back. A dress suit followed this, and some shirts in blue and pink and green effects, a crimson cap and several pairs of wonderful socks. Then he made the startling discovery one morning that he was the only fellow at a recitation who wore high shoes. At noon he went to a shop on the avenue and purchased a pair of low ones with very extended soles. He caught a violent cold the first day he wore them—which happened to be wet and raw—but persisted and suffered in the cause of fashion for a week. When he had to stay in his room for the whole of one day and take medicine, he consoled himself with the knowledge that, even as an invalid, he was attired in the mode.

He joined the Union, bought an H. A. A. ticket and rented a locker at the Newell Boat Club. As he had nothing with which to grace the locker he

purchased a pair of rowing-trunks and a shirt and promised himself a place in a freshman crew. Meanwhile he had joined a freshman club table at The Inn and was living very satisfactorily. But six dollars a week, payable monthly, caused the skeleton to rattle noisily. His connection with the table had come about as the result of an advertisement in the *Crimson*. He had interviewed the fellow who was getting it up and had learned the names of those who had already joined. He had conferred with John North, and the latter had advised him to cast in his lot with the freshmen rather than to go to the general table, where, as John delicately explained, freshmen weren't popular. The Inn was not particularly handy to his rooms, but John insisted that the walk there and back several times daily would do him good.

There were nine other fellows at the table and, with the exceptions of Phillip and a man named Kingsford, all had prepared at the same school and were naturally somewhat clannish. But when a week had passed the two outsiders were accepted by the others, rather patronizingly, to be sure, but still unreservedly, and Phillip found himself amongst a congenial and thoroughly nice set. It did not

occur to him to feel any surprise at his admission any more than when Chester Baker had so unconventionally scraped acquaintance in the Yard. But later on he discovered that he would never have been privileged to fill the vacancy had not his friendship with John North served as a guarantee. Kingsford had been admitted simply because he was one of the Marlborough Street Kingsfords and must of necessity be desirable, on the principle that the King can do no wrong.

During that first week of polite ostracism Phillip and Everett Kingsford got to know each other thoroughly. Phillip felt uncomfortable at times when the conversation at table veered to subjects outside his experience and emphasized his aloofness, but Kingsford found only amusement in the situation.

"It's funny," he confided one day, "how those chaps think that no one who hasn't been to school at Milton can be quite correct. They put up with me because they have been brought up to consider a Boston Kingsford one of the elect, but it's easy to be seen that, try as they may, they can't help looking down on me a bit. And the most amusing thing about it is the really generous and charitable way in which they all strive to conceal it."

Despite the fact that his waking hours were pretty well filled, Phillip pined for other fields in which to win distinction. At Chester's advice he had become a subscriber to the *Crimson*, and every morning he read the calls for candidates for one thing and another and tried to find some line of action that appealed to him. For a week he was undecided whether to try for the Rifle and Pistol Club, the Lacrosse Team or the Pierian Sodality. Later he gave up thoughts of the latter because the only instrument he could play was a jewsharp, and he discovered that for some reason jewsharps were not included in the orchestra. Inquiries elicited the disappointing information that if he joined the Lacrosse Team he could not hope to take part in a game before midspring, and he relinquished the idea of gaining glory in that sport. That left only the Rifle and Pistol Club under consideration, and it is probable that he would have tried there had he not found a notice one day calling for candidates for the Shooting Club. Phillip rather prided himself on his ability with the shotgun, and so attended a meeting in Claverly one Wednesday night and was duly enrolled as a member.

He had not given up hope of gaining a place in

one of the crews, but John had advised against it for the present and so he put off the attempt. He joined a class at the gymnasium and went there every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons and did strange things with chest weights, dumbbells, Indian clubs, ladders and bars, and had aches in all sorts of out-of-the-way corners of his body. But he measured and remeasured his chest and biceps and found, to his delight, that he was rapidly increasing the girth of both.

Squad E had not yet been called to the field, and Phillip realized that his chance of playing on the Freshman Football Team that year was not worth considering. Guy Bassett had been taken onto the second squad and was distinguishing himself there. But Chester, like Phillip, was quite out of it and they bemoaned their fate together.

The freshman reception came off, and Phillip and Chester went to Saunders Theatre and heard much excellent talk and shook hands with a great many persons whose names they could not recall afterward and whom they were practically certain never to meet again. Later, in the transept, they came across Guy Bassett wearing an expression of lively interest. He was in conversation with an earnest

and thin-faced man whose clothes looked several sizes too large for him. As they passed Guy called to them and introduced his companion. They didn't understand his name; it sounded like "Mr. Mummum." Later they learned that Guy didn't know it himself.

"We have been talking about the Christian Club," said Guy, "and——"

"Christian Association," corrected the earnest man gently.

"Of course; very stupid of me—Association I should have said. It's very interesting; in fact, quite astonishing. I refer to the good that the Association has accomplished here in college." Guy laid a hand on Chester's shoulder and addressed him with large enthusiasm. "And I've been telling—er—this gentleman how deeply interested you both are in—er—that sort of thing, you know, and I want you to hear him tell about it. That is," turning to the earnest one, "if you have time."

"Yes, indeed; I shall be happy to explain something of our work," replied the other eagerly. "I am delighted to find any members of the—ah—entering class who are interested in the subject of spiritual betterment and christian endeavour." He

positively beamed. Chester strove to break away from Guy's detaining grasp and Phillip looked blank.

"Awfully kind of you," exclaimed Guy. "You'll find both these chaps earnest and—er—eager, I am sure, to take practical interest in the Association. Mr. Baker, especially, is the man for you, and I truly hope that you may be able to prevail upon him to take up the Bible study work. I'm very glad to have met you, sir, and hope to do so again frequently." He shook hands with the other. "I will consider the matter and let you hear from me. Good-night, sir; good-night."

He favoured Chester and Phillip with a satyr-like grin and hurried away after refreshments. Twenty minutes later his victims followed, murder in their eyes, but both Guy and the refreshments had disappeared.

"Phil, have you the slightest idea what we promised that fellow?" asked Chester wearily as they crossed Broadway.

"No; only I remember you told him you'd be on hand next Sunday."

"Did I? I daresay. Great Scott, how he can talk! If I don't get even with Guy for this I'm—

I'm—I'll——" But words failed him and he stumbled into Thayer without saying good-night.

Phillip's Sunday evenings with John and David Meadowcamp had now become regular institutions, and he looked forward to them with real pleasure. He saw John frequently during the week, but their various meetings, at Soldiers' Field, in the square or at The Inn were short and hurried. But another custom which Phillip had formed was destined to result in less good. On Saturday nights he and Chester visited Guy in the latter's rooms, where they smoked many more cigars and cigarettes than was good for them and drank beer from mugs which had music boxes secreted in them—a harmless enough dissipation if it had ended there.

CHAPTER VII

Guy occupied rooms in Randolph. He shared them with a freshman named Boerick, a tall, saturnine and unpopular fellow, who, as the possessor of an income sufficient to the needs of a prince, was frankly intolerant of those less lavish in the display of wealth. His admiration for Guy was the exception proving the rule. Guy was well supplied with money, but, unlike his roommate, never made known the fact save in the elegance of his clothes. He treated Boerick with good-natured contempt, explaining to those who expressed surprise at his friendship for that person that Boerick had become necessary to him.

"I couldn't do without him now," he declared. "He's really a sort of penance, like a hair shirt or something of that kind, you know. Without him I would undoubtedly be much more comfortable, but I'd certainly miss him terribly. I'd have nothing to scratch against my sensibilities. Besides, he's an ever-present moral lesson, pointing

out eloquently the danger of combining wealth with small minds."

As a rule Boerick was not present during Phillip's Saturday night visits to Guy, a fact for which Phillip was heartily thankful, since the other's disdain always made him long to punch his nose. On a certain Saturday evening about a month after the opening of college Phillip and Chester found, on reaching Guy's study, that Boerick was in possession of the couch and was evidently inclined to spend the evening at home. Phillip returned his off-hand salutation politely and for the next half-hour carefully left him to Chester, who looked upon him much as a small boy looks upon an animal in the Zoo, and who was always glad of the opportunity to, figuratively, punch him through the bars and hear him growl.

Guy had been lined up that afternoon in the freshman second team during a stiff game with the first, and as a result was feeling tired and a trifle bored. He yawned several times in the course of a desultory conversation with Phillip, and finally, tossing aside his cigar, arose and stretched his arms wearily overhead. "Look here, you fellows, I'm sick of jabber. Who's for a game of cards?"

"Good stuff!" cried Chester. "Fetch 'em out."

"You play?" asked Guy, turning to Phillip.

"A little."

"What are you going to play?" asked Boerick.

"Oh, nickel ante, I guess."

"Too exciting; leave me out."

"You'll either get off that couch and take a hand or you'll be put out," said Guy firmly. Boerick grinned and drew a chair to the table from which Guy had swept everything unceremoniously onto the floor. But even nickel-ante didn't prove sufficiently exhilarating to Guy, and when, after some twenty minutes of play during which Phillip won forty cents, Boerick proposed raising the limit to a dollar, he promptly agreed. Phillip hesitated. He had only about six dollars in his pocket, while his entire wealth was represented by something well under a hundred.

"I'll look on, I reckon," he announced.

"Oh, come on in," urged Chester. "It won't hurt you."

"To lose your money," said Guy, "is one of the few really satisfactory ways of enjoying life. That's what money's for—to lose. As the psalmist so sweetly sings, 'Here to-day and gone to-morrow;

squander what you've got, then borrow.' Besides, it is quite within the possibilities that you'll win enough to give us all a dinner at the Touraine. Come to think about it, fellows, I'm not sure that it isn't a decidedly risky thing we're doing. Virginians, you know, have a devil of a reputation for cards and pistols."

"That was before the war," drawled Boerick. "Virginia has degenerated. Isn't that so, Ryerson?"

"No," replied Phillip, striving to conceal his annoyance. "Our reputation as card-players may be gone, but I reckon we're still right handy with a pistol."

"Oh, I apologize," laughed Boerick. "You're wise to leave cards alone, then, and wait until the pistols come on. Still, if it's merely a matter of lack of money, I should be delighted to loan you what you need. Though, honestly, I had begun to congratulate myself upon at last having met with a Southerner who wasn't dead broke."

"Shut up, Joe," said Guy. "Cut for deal."

Phillip felt the blood mounting to his face, and would gladly have given all the money he feared to risk at cards for the privilege of leaning across the table and slapping Boerick's face. As it was he

kept silence a moment until he was sure that his voice was steady. Then he answered:

"We Virginians are not in the habit of borrowing. Perhaps that's one reason some of us are so poor. But the reason I hesitated about playing is that I have only a few dollars with me and it hardly seems worth while to start. I'm not much of a poker hand."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Chester. "Paper's good amongst friends; eh, Guy?"

"Good as gold; especially Phil's. I must decline, however, to take any of your I. O. U.'s, Joe; I'm a burned child, my boy."

Boerick grinned, but did not relish Chester's laughter. "If I owe you anything——" he began.

"You don't, Joe," answered Guy. "You always pay up in the end. The trouble is your ends are so darned long coming! Your ante, Phil."

For the next half-hour Phillip, as a result of careful playing, managed to hold his own. Boerick indulged in a number of sarcasms at his expense, and Phillip wished that he had enough money to accept the frequent challenges. But he kept his temper and his six dollars and was congratulating himself upon the fact when Chester called for a jackpot. At the

end of the fifth deal the little pile in the centre of the board had assumed quite generous proportions, while Phillip's capital had dwindled sadly. Luck, however, was with him, for Chester opened, and Phillip, with all the courage of ignorance, drew to a flush and filled. Guy dropped out and Chester followed a moment later, leaving Phillip and Boerick to fight it out. Phillip was quite in the dark as to what manner of hand his adversary held, but he met each raise until two real and twelve mythical dollars lay in the pot. It is probable that he would have kept on until midnight had he not glanced up to find a warning look on Chester's face. Then he called and a moment later was drawing his winnings toward him. Boerick's hand had consisted of two pairs, aces and fours.

"These Virginians!" sighed Guy.

Boerick looked angry. Like all who pride themselves on their ability to play poker, he hated to lose—especially to Phillip, who was the veriest novice. He gathered up the cards and remarked sneeringly:

"It's sometimes better to be lucky than to know how, eh, Ryerson?"

"I reckon you're the one who is in luck," answered

Phillip. "If I hadn't taken pity on you and called you'd have lost a heap more than you did."

"Now will you be good?" asked Chester.

"Well, next time don't mind my feelings," replied Boerick, ungraciously. "I like to lose to folks who need the money."

"Thanks." Phillip smiled over at him sweetly. "I've heard you were a bit of a philanthropist."

Guy and Chester laughed loudly. Boerick's money seldom aided any one save Boerick.

"Well, it's about my bedtime, fellows," announced Guy. "We'll play one more round."

"Jackpots," suggested Chester. "I've got to get back some of the stuff I've lost to you dubs or I'll be on half-rations for a week."

"Jackpots it is," answered Guy. "Deal the cards, my philanthropic Joseph."

During the next three rounds Phillip's winnings dwindled until only a trifle over his original six dollars remained beside him. But on the fourth fortune seemed to favour him again. It was Chester's deal and Boerick opened for half a dollar.

"Cards?" he asked.

Guy shook his head solemnly. "Perish the thought!"

Phillip drew one and bettered his hand. He held a full house, Jacks and eights. Chester drew three cards and imperturbably lighted a fresh cigarette. Boerick discarded one card and dealt himself another, placing it, however, face down in front of him.

"I haven't the least idea what it is," he said with a bit of a swagger, "but I'll bet one dollar that it's what I want it to be. And it'll cost the rest of you about fifty to turn it up."

"Silly child," murmured Guy, "I'll see your old dollar and raise you to the full extent of the law."

Phillip followed suit, as did Chester, and for a minute the quartette solemnly and silently increased the pot. Then Chester, with a sigh, dropped out. Phillip's ready money was gone now and he was staking paper. Boerick, with the unknown card before him, smiled aggravatingly across at Phillip, until any discreet notion the latter may have entertained of leaving the roommates to fight it out between them was overcome by a determination to lose every cent he possessed rather than allow Boerick to think he was frightened.

Chester had pushed back his chair and was leaning over Phillip's shoulder. But whether he approved or disapproved of his friend's betting the latter

couldn't tell. Phillip's six dollars were now buried under a pile of chips, and he stood to lose more than he dared think about. Guy remained smiling and indifferent.

"Pile 'em up, Joseph," he urged. "I need your money."

At length even Joseph was impressed by his chum's confidence and paused to view the pile of chips.

"I said fifty dollars, didn't I?" he asked. "Well, I guess the fifty's there. So——"

"But why stop at fifty?" asked Guy. "Heavens, man! do you think for a moment that my spending ability is limited to fifty dollars? Go ahead; play your part, Joe. Remember you're a philanthropist!"

"I call you," replied Boerick sulkily.

Guy sighed. "Was there ever such luck?" he asked despondently. "To think of wasting a hand like this on a paltry fifty dollars." He laid down his cards, three queens and a pair of deuces, and glanced politely at Boerick. Boerick raised the card before him and with gloomy countenance showed his hand.

"Aces and nines?" said Guy. "Oh, hardly fit,

Joe, hardly fit!" He turned to Phillip. But that youth's cards were already on the board and he was calmly accepting one of Chester's cigarettes.

"By Jove, Phil, you nearly had it, eh? Well, better luck next time."

"Hope so," replied Phillip indifferently. "See how much I owe you, will you please?"

Guy glanced over the sheet beside him.

"Fifty-eight seventy-five, Phil."

"Thanks." The fingers holding the cigarette trembled a trifle, but Phillip's voice was beautifully untroubled. "I'll pay you to-morrow."

"Please don't," begged Guy. "There isn't the least hurry. And besides, it might set an uncomfortable example to Joe here."

Phillip laughed. "I'd rather, though," answered he. "Coming, Chester?"

"I was tickled blue when Guy won that last pot from Boerick," said Chester, as they went up the street. "I lost about twenty, but I don't mind as long as he didn't get it."

"Yes," answered Phillip abstractedly. On the avenue they parted and Phillip went home to his room. He undressed thoughtfully, donned a night-shirt, lighted a short pipe and stretched himself out

on the bed, his arms beneath his head. Maid, after a moment of consideration, crept up beside him and went to sleep there with long sighs of happiness. After the pipe had burned out and grown cold it still hung from between clenched teeth. Phillip was thinking.

CHAPTER VIII

FOOTBALL affairs at Harvard went so smoothly that autumn, and promised so well that the local prophets were unanimous in declaring that "unless there came a slump at the critical moment" or "barring serious injuries to the players" or "if the present steady improvement in team-work continued," Harvard would score a victory in the final game. A well-known authority (writing from New Haven), whose weekly articles were syndicated throughout the country, expressed the opinion—carefully hidden in a column and a half of close type—that, unless Yale played considerably better than her present performance promised, or Harvard failed to justify the hopes of her coaches, the contest would be an extremely close and interesting one, and that victory, by whoever won, would be well deserved.

At Cambridge, coaches and captain and trainer put on very lugubrious expressions whenever the 'varsity was mentioned, and scratched wood and

also muttered "*unberufen*" on even the slightest provocation.

John North was out on the field daily for the better part of two hours, dressed in togs that would have disgraced an old clothes man if found in his possession. His efforts were chiefly directed at the guards, and the way in which he seized those weighty players and pushed them about was beautiful to see. After a particularly hard afternoon's practice he was ready to admit that coaching was stiffer work than being coached. And there were evening meetings which had a way of coming when most inconvenient, and at which he was expected to deliver terse homilies on breaking through and blocking and other artifices of the game. With it all he had little opportunity for cultivating the further acquaintance of Phillip and enacting the rôle of guardian to that youth. He told himself daily that he was derelict in his duty, and promised to find time the next day to look up his charge and salve his conscience. But his good resolutions came to naught. On Sunday evenings Phillip always showed up at his room, and the three, often reinforced by the presence of a visitor, spent a pleasant hour or two. David spoke of them as family gatherings

and dutifully kept awake until they had broken up. But John found that Phillip since the previous Sunday had undergone experiences and made friends quite on his own hook and was generally managing his affairs without recourse to the maturer advice of John or David or anybody else. So far, John was sure the boy had not "broken out of pasture," as Corliss put it. Chester Baker and Guy Bassett and Everett Kingsford were all straightforward, healthy-minded fellows, than whom no better associates could have fallen to Phillip's lot. But, as John told himself with compunction, that Phillip had been so fortunate in his choice of friends was due to no help of his. He had replied to Corliss's letter and had promised to look after Phillip. And he hadn't kept his promise, or, at least, not fully. And then there was Margaret! What would Margaret think of him if she knew how illy he was executing his trust? For some reason it was always the latter thought that troubled him most.

And so one day—it was during the first week in November; a leaden, cheerless afternoon, with a stinging wind blowing across Soldiers' Field from the river—John came out of the locker building an hour earlier than usual and, with the sparks blowing

from his pipe-bowl, strode across the yellowing turf toward where, from the shelter of a little, iron-sheathed hut at the far end of the field, puffs of white smoke told that the Shooting Club were at practice. John nodded to several fellows he knew and found a sheltered corner. Phillip was shooting, a straight, wide-hipped, graceful figure in an old canvas coat, his battered Winchester shotgun, in noticeable contrast to the highly polished Scotts and Dalys that John saw about him, held easily before him.

"Ready!"

"Pull!"

A trap clicked and a Blue Rock quivered away to the left; there was a puff of smoke, a report and a little crackling sound as the clay disk broke into fragments. Another trap was sprung and again the butt was swung easily against the shoulder and once more the speeding bird fell in fragments. The left-hand trap sprang a broken disk, but Phillip, amidst the laughter of the watchers, chose the largest portion and sent it swerving out of its track.

"No bird," called the scorer, and on the next try, a mean flight at a wide angle, he again scored a hit.

"Rather a good shot, isn't he?" asked John of a neighbour.

"A peach! He's better than usual to-day; hasn't made a miss yet. His name's Ryerson and he comes from Virginia. I fancy he's done a lot of quail shooting; there's nothing like that to give you an eye, you know."

Phillip broke his gun, blew through the barrel and stepped back to the hut, looking quite as sober as though he had missed every bird. "He's coming on," thought John. "The ability to disguise your satisfaction at a deed well done seems to be one of the first lessons we teach at college nowadays." He nodded to Phillip and the latter joined him.

"Hello," he said. "Have they discharged you from the board of coaches?"

"No," replied John; "but I got through early and thought I'd come over and see you shoot. They tell me you're quite a dab at it."

"Oh, well, I manage to hit them now and then. Of course, the captain there is our star. We're about through. If you'll wait I'll walk back with you."

John waited and they tramped back to the square in the teeth of the November gale, loitering a minute

or two on the porch of the Weld Club house to watch one of the crews disembark—eight glowing, water-drenched young giants and a shrill-voiced, imperative wisp of a coxswain. Phillip accompanied John to his room and they had a restful smoke in the gathering darkness, their feet well up and their heads well back, with the subdued clanging of the cars on the avenue and the rattling of the case-ments under the assaults of the wind for an accompaniment to their lazy conversation.

“Larry Baker told me you were round to see him the other night,” said John.

“Yes; I really didn’t want to go. I thought maybe he’d think I was cheeky. But he didn’t seem to mind; in fact, he was right nice to me.”

“Why should he mind? This thing of each class huddling to itself like a lot of chickens in a rain-storm is all poppycock, Phil. We’re all in the same boat; we’re all Harvard men. What earthly difference does it make whether a chap is a first year man or a fourth? Why shouldn’t I take my friends from the freshmen or sophomores if I can find them there? If there were more coalescence between the upper classes and the lower it would be a darned sight better, I think.”

"I reckon it would be better for the lower men," laughed Phillip, "but it might be a bit of a bore to the upper. We freshies are a kiddish lot, you know—that is, most of us. Some aren't. There's Guy Bassett. He seems more like a fellow of twenty-five or six than a freshman, he's so kind of serious and—and smart."

"I've heard of Bassett," yawned John. "Came from Exeter. I believe he's about twenty. His folks sent him to school when he was fourteen and he stayed there until Christmas, and then disappeared from human ken for the space of eighteen months or so. When they heard from him next he was in Melbourne, having, I think, gone pretty well around two sides of the globe on a schooner. At least, that's the yarn Larry Baker tells."

"Really? I'd never heard that," answered Phillip. "I reckon that accounts for his seeming so old and—experienced."

"I daresay. What kind of a chap is he now? Quiet or—er—up to things?"

"Oh, quiet, I'd call him. He plays football, you know. He's on the freshman second, and I reckon he'll make the first before the Yale game. Yes, he

seems quiet enough. He rooms with a fellow named Boerick—an awful beast.”

“Yes, I’ve met Boerick,” laughed John. “This is his second year as a freshie. He *is* a beast, isn’t he? Awful cad. His father has gobs of money; made it in the clothing business in New York. You can see his ads. any old day in the papers: ‘Now then, how about a new overcoat for winter? Getting chilly, isn’t it? Have you seen our nobby Newmarkets in English worsteds? We like them ourselves; maybe you would if you saw them. Only thing is, when they’re gone—and they’re going fast—there won’t be any more. A word to the wise!’ *That’s* the style, you know; that beastly familiar style that always makes me want to kick somebody.”

Phillip laughed.

“Talking of clothing,” he said presently, “I’ve had some new things made, and they’ve cost an awful lot of money. I didn’t know things were so high.”

“It’s a way they have hereabouts,” answered John. “If you want to get anything at a reasonable price the best plan is to make affidavit that you’re a car conductor or a coal-heaver or something of that sort; anything save a Harvard student. The shop-

keepers think we're fair game for anything. Try it next time, Phil."

"I reckon there won't be any next time," answered Phillip ruefully; "at any rate, not for a good while. Fact is, I'm pretty well cleaned out."

"Yes? I presume what Davy calls 'boarding and baiting' is costing more than you thought it would?"

"N—no; it's—it's the other things, you see: clothes and belonging to things, like the Shooting Club, and—— Oh, I don't know; there's always something!"

"I see. In other words, the price of admission is what you expected," said John, "but the figures on the menu are fierce. Well, it's all part of the programme, Phil. It's a sort of course in practical economy, you know, in which you're your own instructor and in which an E is the average mark; a course in which, strange to say, lectures follow examinations."

"That's the worst of it," said Phillip. "I'd ought to be lectured, but I won't be. Mamma will tell Margey that it was ridiculous of them to expect me to get along until Christmas on so little, and will be in an awful fidget until I assure her that I haven't

suffered any privations. I—I wish father had lived.”

“You’re a queer beggar, Phil. But, I say, I wouldn’t—er—bother your sister and your mother too much about money affairs. If you need any I’ll always be glad to loan, Phil. And, honestly, I feel rather guilty about you, old man. You know I undertook to sort of keep an eye on you, and I haven’t done it. I daresay I might have saved some of that money to you if I’d been around.”

“Thank you,” answered Phillip, “but I’d rather not borrow from anybody, John. I’ve written home and told Margey what a blamed fool I’ve been and all that, and I reckon I’ll have some money as soon as I need it. It isn’t that that’s troubling me. But—but how shall I get along for the next three years and a half without spending a sight more than I’m worth? If I was being educated for something, you see—if I was going to be a doctor or a lawyer or anything practical it wouldn’t be so hopeless. But I’m just ‘going through Harvard,’ as my father did, merely because—because he wanted it.”

“But, great Scott, Phil, you’ve only begun! There’s time yet to decide on a profession. Why not be a lawyer?”

"I couldn't," answered Phillip decisively. "I haven't the least aptitude for it, John. No, I'd rather be a good farmer than a poor lawyer. And I reckon that's what it'll come to. After all, I might do worse. Elaine can be made to pay right well, I reckon, and I can find plenty of work there. It's a healthful, wide-awake sort of life, with plenty of enjoyment, and I reckon it's about the only sort I'm fit for."

"Blessed is that man who has found his work," quoted John. "And, for my part, I can't imagine a more ideal existence than farming a place like Elaine—or even a good deal smaller place—as long as it could be made to pay for itself and supply a few luxuries. I don't think I'd trouble about a profession, Phil. Be a farmer and thank the Lord you live in a State where you can be that and a gentleman at the same time. And don't think for a moment that a college education is wasted on you. It'll pay for itself in the long run; it would if you were only going to lay sewer pipe all the rest of your days."

"Do you really think so?" asked Phillip doubtfully.

"I really do. We hear a good deal of talk nowadays about the superiority of the practical over the

college education. There are a number of men who, by dogged perseverance and hard labour, have managed to accumulate millions of dollars without ever having set foot in college. Some of these have a good deal to say about the uselessness of college learning. But it's a safe bet that if those same men *had* gone to college they'd have piled up their millions just the same, and it's more than probable that they'd have made the piles bigger than they are. If learning to be self-dependent, broad-minded, well poised mentally and physically, isn't practical education, what in Heaven's name is?"

"Well. . . . But broad-minded?" demurred Phillip. "That's the very thing that lots of folks say college men are not."

"And I say they are," answered John warmly. "I'm not discussing the men of any special university; I mean all of them—Harvard men, Yale men, Oxford men, the whole push. They've got to be broad-minded if only for the reason that they have learned how broad the world is. I don't mean to say that college men, like other men, have no hobbies or prejudices. Of course they have; they can be just as big cranks as any. But the fact that you're brushing a fly off your nose doesn't signify that you haven't a

long reach. Don't be afraid that college is going to narrow your mind, Phil. You'll find, to the contrary, that it has much the same effect upon it as chest-weights have on your lungs. And, by the way, how comes on the physical development?"

"Oh, I'm getting more like Sandow every day," laughed Phillip. "And I'm going to take your advice and try track work. I think I could run right well if I knew more about it."

"Good work. And how about studies? Having much trouble?"

"N—no, I'm getting along a heap better than I expected to. Government bothers me a good deal; but I reckon I'll pass in it all right."

Footsteps sounded outside the door and the letter-drop clicked. John dropped his feet from the window-seat and pulled himself out of his chair. Phillip followed his example.

"Don't run off," said John. "I'll just light up and see what's in the mail. I've been expecting a letter from my folks since Saturday."

"I've got to go back to the room before dinner," answered Phillip, as the gas flared up, "and so I reckon I'll jog along." He walked toward the door. John had gathered several letters from the rug and

was examining them on the table. The writing on the envelope of one was wholly unfamiliar and he glanced at the postmark and with difficulty made it out: "Melville C. H., Va." He started and glanced quickly at Phillip.

"Hold on, Phil," he called, "here's——" He stopped himself suddenly. "Never mind; it's nothing. Wish you'd stay and come to dinner with me. No? Well, so long; very glad you came in, Phil. Don't forget Sunday night if I don't see you before."

When the door had closed behind the other, John's gaze returned to the letter in his hand and his forehead became a maze of creases. Then he slowly slit the envelope and, drawing forth the single sheet it held, glanced perplexedly at the signature. He read it twice and his frown of perplexity gave place to an odd little smile that expressed wonderment, pleasure and something of dismay. Laying down the missive, he went to the pipe-tray, refilled his briar and lighted it, keeping the while an eye on the letter as though he feared it would whisk itself out of sight. Then he drew a chair to the light, settled himself comfortably and took up the letter again. But ere he began it he turned it over and looked once more at

the signature as if in doubt as to the correctness of his previous interpretation of the small yet angular writing. But there was no mistake; the letters spelled "Margaret Ryerson" and nothing else. John emitted a sigh of relief and turned to the beginning. This is what he read:

"MY DEAR MR. NORTH:

"Your kind reply to Mr. Corliss, which he thoughtfully forwarded to us, is the only excuse I can offer for troubling you further with our difficulties, and I do hope you will not regret undertaking what I know must, with all your duties, be a great trouble to you. I am writing this in behalf of my mother, who is unable to attend to such things. And she asks me to try and tell you how deeply grateful she is for your kindness to Phillip. I fear, though, that I can't do that in a letter. I can only beg you to believe that both my mother and myself feel that nothing we can say or do will requite you for your services to us. Phillip is very dear to us both, and it is such a great comfort to know that there is some one older and more experienced than he to whom he can appeal for advice and whom he may look upon as a friend. It has made us very happy down here at Elaine, you may be sure.

“But there is another matter in which I want to ask your help, and this part of my letter is on no one’s authority but my own, for I have thought best not to worry my mother with the affair. Phillip has just written us that he has lost some money at cards, not a great deal, but a considerable sum to us ‘poor Virginians.’ Perhaps Mr. Corliss wrote you that our circumstances are considerably altered since my father’s death? We really have very little money now, although when our property here is sold we shall not be poverty stricken. We thought it a pity to spoil Phillip’s enjoyment of his first year at college by acquainting him with the real state of affairs, and so he doesn’t know how hard it is for us to find the money for his expenses. And we had rather he didn’t know yet. And so if there is any way of keeping him from playing cards for money, won’t you please try it? It is not that we are very strict here about such things; only that Phillip, though he does not know it, cannot afford to use his money that way. I am sure that you will find some manner of keeping him from it without letting him know I have written to you. I fear he would not forgive me if he knew. We have no right to ask you to give your time to looking after Phillip, and you

must think us very selfish and exacting. But do please believe that, at least, we are not ungrateful.

“Thanking you again on my mother’s behalf and on my own,
Sincerely yours,

“MARGARET RYERSON.”

When David came in a few minutes later he found John puffing hard at an empty pipe, his hands—one of them holding a letter—clasped behind his head and his countenance expressing great contentment.

CHAPTER IX

WHILE they were preparing for bed that night John took David into his confidence, in a measure, and asked his advice. He made no mention of the letter. David's views were not encouraging.

"What you want to do," he said, "is to retire into the extreme distance and rest upon your haunches. Every fellow has the inalienable right to get rid of his money as he bloody well pleases, and even a foster-mother has no business dictating, Johnny. If I were Phil and you tried it with me I'd punch your old head for you."

"But Phil hasn't the right to spend money he hasn't got," answered John. "And that's what it amounts to. Of course, it's mostly his family's fault. They've no business letting him think that there's plenty of money when there isn't——"

"Different from most fellows' families," growled David.

"Well, it's my duty to interfere."

"It's your duty to mind your own affairs. Look

here, has Phil owned up to you that he's been losing his tin?"

"Not exactly. He acknowledges that he's broke, but he hasn't mentioned cards."

"Then how are you going to speak to him about it? If you go to him and say 'Look here, some one—I can't tell you who—tells me that you've lost more money than is good for you at cards,' he'll simply get mightily insulted and won't speak to you again until you apologize."

"Yes, I think he would," mused John.

"Well, there you are!"

"And so I shan't say a word to him about it. You see, I hadn't intended to," said John sweetly.

"Then what's all this jabbering for?"

"It's always a pleasure, an intellectual treat, to hear your opinions, Davy. Good-night."

What John did the next morning was entirely characteristic of him. He went to Guy Bassett's room, introduced himself, and told his mission in less than two dozen words. If Guy experienced either surprise or amusement he was too courteous to show it. Instead, he expressed much pleasure at meeting John, listened politely to what he had to say and then proffered his cigarette case.

"We did play rather high one night," he said, "and Ryerson lost about sixty dollars, I believe. Since then we have confined ourselves to ten-cent limit and I'm certain he hasn't dropped more than a two-dollar bill. Of course, if I'd known what I do now I wouldn't have played with him. I supposed he had plenty of money, and the charming promptitude with which he paid his debts confirmed the supposition. I like Phil; he's refreshingly simple and human; and he's plucky, too; and so I'll see that he doesn't lose any more of his money here, North. For that matter, though, I guess he's learned his lesson. I'm awfully much obliged to you for coming and telling me about it; and very glad to have had the pleasure of meeting you. Good-morning."

In the afternoon John went to the Union and, establishing himself at a corner desk in the writing-room, picked holes in the nice clean crimson blotter for fully twenty minutes before he set pen to paper. When he did he wrote steadily for three pages. Then he read what he had written, smiled as though well pleased with it, chewed the end of his pen-holder for awhile, and then slowly and regretfully tore his letter into minute fragments. In its stead

he filled a page with his small, heavy writing and subscribed himself, "Faithfully, John North." He addressed the envelope to "Miss Ryerson, Elaine, Melville Court House, Virginia," and dropped it into the box in the hall with elaborate carelessness lest Phillip should be looking on and should in some wonderful manner guess its destination. Then, whistling contentedly, he thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and strode off to the field and practice.

The date of the Yale game was but some two weeks distant and confidence in a victory for the Crimson was steadily increasing throughout the college. The prophets were working overtime and, as is their wont, were writing more and saying less each day. It was nearing the time to send in applications for tickets, a fact of which Phil was reminded that evening. Everett Kingsford walked down the avenue with him after dinner and guided him into Leavitt's for a game of billiards, a game for which Phillip had the highest admiration and at which he invariably lost. A counter was littered with blank applications and the two helped themselves.

"You're an H. A. A. ticket-holder, aren't you?" Kingsford asked.

"Yes."

"Well, look here, then. I've got to take some of my folks to the game. There'll be the mater and my sister and a friend; that means four seats, counting my own. I can only apply for two, of course. Are you going to take any one?"

"No, I reckon not. I hadn't thought of it."

"Well, will you put in your application with mine? I've got another fellow who is going to. That will give us six seats together, you see. Of course I'll pay you for the second ticket. If you don't want to be bothered talking to women folks you can have the end seat, but I want you to meet the mater. I think you'd like her."

"I'd like to," answered Phillip, "and the friend, too."

"Oh, the friend!" laughed Kingsford. "Well, I can't allow that, Phil. I'll let you sit between Betty and the mater, but the friend's barred."

"Who's Betty? Your sister?"

"She has that honour."

"Is she—is she intellectual?"

"Terribly; a regular blue-stockings. But I'll tell her to be easy on you. Besides, the mater'll see

fair play. You make out your application tomorrow and we'll get them in. Your shot."

Phillip, after long and careful aim, missed a simple carrom, and Kingsford, lounging negligently about the table, made a run of fourteen, while his adversary looked on enviously from the seat.

One chill and cloudy afternoon Phillip and Chester marched in a procession composed of some six hundred patriotic and enthusiastic fellows from the Union out to Soldiers' Field, taking in the Yard en route and gathering recruits from halls and dormitories. At the head strode a band. Then came a diligent junior with a big crimson megaphone, and behind him the classes marshaled according to seniority, and each preceeded by a flapping banner bearing the class numerals. Phillip and his friends were at the tag end, but it was all very inspiriting and impressive, and he was glad he belonged. And it was rather good fun, too, for it was the proper thing to walk on the heels of the fellows in front whenever possible and apologize profusely when they showed displeasure. The cheering and singing were incessant, and they crossed the square, where the sidewalks were lined with town folk and shopkeepers, the feminine

element largely predominating, chanting the jovial strains of "Up the Street" with might and main:

"Look where the Crimson banners fly!
Hark to the sound of tramping feet!
There is a host approaching nigh—
Harvard is marching up the street!
Onward to victory again!
Marching with drum-beat and with song—
Hear the refrain!
As it thunders along—as it thunders along!
Behold! they come in view!
Who wear the Crimson hue—
Whose arms are strong, whose hearts are true!
Ever to Harvard! ever to Harvard!"

From the band far up at the head of the line came the shrilling of the piccolos for a little space and with it the steady tramp, tramp of many feet. And then the drums crashed again and the voices took up the song once more, grandly, confidently:

"And Harvard's glory shall be our aim,
And through the ages the sound shall roll,
When all together we cheer her name—
When we cheer her with heart and soul!"

Out Boylston Street they went, cheering by classes, across the little drawbridge which creaked complainingly beneath them, into the field by the big gate and past the monument. Outside the gridiron they came to a halt. The entrances were draped with canvas and secret practice was not yet over. So the indefatigable junior with the mega-

phone mounted a pile of lumber and called for more cheers; cheers for the players separately and collectively, for the coaches one by one and for the trainer, and finally for the college. And overhead the workmen leaned down from the big, many-trussed stand they were erecting and grinned sympathy and approval.

At last the canvas was drawn aside and the band and the followers marched into the amphitheatre. On the gridiron players and coaches paused for a moment to watch as the procession passed them and made its way around the field to the farther stand, and it is scarcely conceivable, despite the disinterested expression of their faces, that they were unmoved by the hearty cheers that arose to the bleak, wind-swept sky.

On the south stand the audience gathered itself into a group that looked very small against the long expanse of empty seats, and the players were lined up for an open practice game. But the audience paid for what was shown it. The songs that were to be sung at the big game were gone over with again and again, and the cheering was practised until throats grew dry and voices hoarse. During the five minutes' intermission John North and

several other coaches got together and joined their voices to the mighty chorus that swept across the field:

“Hard luck for poor old Eli!
Tough on the blue!
Now, all together,
Smash them and break through!
'Gainst the line of Crimson
They can't prevail.
Three cheers for Harvard!
And down with Yale!”

“If we could only win the game by cheering,” said the head coach, “I think I'd be quite satisfied with things.”

“We can come pretty near doing it that way,” answered John. “That sort of thing is worth at least two scores.”

Later the procession formed again and marched back the way it had come, still singing, still cheering, the fellows dancing arm in arm from side to side across the dusty road. But the freshman contingent, or the greater part of it, didn't return to the square then, but veered off, swaying, snake-like, across the turf to where their eleven was battling with the second squad. There they practically surrounded the players, so that from a little distance it looked as though an impromptu prize-fight were going on, and cheered them incessantly

and got in their way every moment and arose to wonderful heights of enthusiasm. Phillip and Chester pushed their way to near where Guy Bassett was playing right end on the second team and applauded his every act wildly. Nothing was too trivial to win their plaudits. If he rubbed his hands together they cheered madly; if he shoved his opponent they cried "Played, Bassett! Played, sir!" and if he ran their enthusiasm simply overpowered them and they waved their caps frantically and leaped into the air and hugged each other ecstatically. Their friends rallied to them in such numbers that when, presently, Guy got the ball on a double pass and promptly fumbled and lost it, the "three long Harvards and three times three for Bassett" which thundered forth might have been heard half a mile away. Guy bore it splendidly for awhile and they got little satisfaction, but the applause called forth by his fumble was the last straw; and, goaded to madness, he turned and charged the group of his too ardent admirers and scattered them. The crowd cheered, and when Phillip and Chester found each other again they deemed discretion the better part of valour and marched back across the river in single file, Chester

imitating a bass drum and a cornet alternately and Phillip singing "Hard Luck" and cheering for everything he could think of.

"Anyhow," said Chester, when they had reached Phillip's room and had subsided, weary and panting, onto the couch and had been duly licked by Maid, "that evens up things with Guy. I move that we forgive him for introducing us to the Christian Association chap."

"Seconded," cried Phillip.

"Moved and carried," cried Chester. "He is forgiven!"

Then came one dismal and dripping morning when Phillip cut two recitations to stand in line in the little stuffy post-office and await his turn to receive Yale game tickets, which were distributed by registered mail. Kingsford had promised to come at half past ten and relieve him, but he evidently thought better of it, for that hour passed without his appearance. The line began at the last window and then wound and rewound about the room, flanked on either side by pools of water from wet umbrellas. The crowd, which was good-naturedly impatient, broke into cheers on the slightest provocation—such as the advent of some

fellow of prominence in college or the advance of the line after a long delay occasioned by the temporary disappearance of some one's envelope.

Whenever an envelope revealed the obnoxious green tickets of the west stand groans of sympathy nerved the recipient to a show of fortitude. All sorts of awful tales illustrating the depravity of the committee in charge of the distribution were told, while a small junior with a head for figures proved conclusively that the 34,000 seats would be gone long before the season ticket holders were reached. He did this by covering a ground-glass window with numerals and breaking the point of his fountain pen. Phillip had digested a wealth of information regarding the pernicious habits of the gypsy moth and the methods of extermination, and was two-thirds of the way down the list of advertised letters when Guy Bassett appeared.

"I'll match you to see whether I take your place and get your tickets or whether you keep your place and get mine," he said.

They matched and Phillip won. Guy took his place with a sigh.

"If I don't show up by to-morrow night," he said, "write to my folks and tell them I perished nobly

in performance of my duty. How long have you been circulating around this picturesque and well-ventilated salon?"

"About an hour and a quarter," answered Phillip. "Seems to me it's a mighty poor arrangement. Why can't they give out the tickets at the Union or somewhere? I've heard lots of fellows kicking about it."

"Really?" asked Guy. "And—speak lower!—did you by any possibility overhear any one suggest writing to the *Crimson* about it? Don't be afraid to answer; I'm discretion itself."

"Why, yes, I heard several. Why?"

"Thank Heaven!" said Guy fervently. "The old spirit that refuses to endure unjust oppression is still with us. Just so long as we have the courage to write to the *Crimson* protesting against the 'present unsatisfactory method of distributing the Yale game tickets' the cause of liberty is not lost! Varian—he's an editor or an office boy or a printer's devil or something on the *Crimson*—told me yesterday that they're going to issue a special sixteen-page paper this year to accommodate the letters from indignant subscribers. I'm going to write myself; I promised him I would. And you ought to, too.

It's your duty. Think it over. And, by the way, if you care about getting these tickets, you'd better call at my room this afternoon about four. So long."

When Phillip got the tickets he was inclined to follow Guy's advice and "register a kick." There were six of them, two of his own, two for Kingsford and two for a fellow named Muir, and they were half-way up the South Stand and just back of the ten-yard line. But Kingsford said it didn't matter; that he wasn't going to watch a lot of sluggers wrestle about in the mud; that he had other things to do during the game.

"Oh!" said Phillip. "Well, that's well enough for you; you've got your friend. But how about me?"

"Why, you ingrate! Haven't I agreed to put you between the mater and my sister? The mater will tell you all about the strange ailments that visited me when I was a babe in arms, and how from the very earliest moment I gave indications of the intellect that is now making me famous. And Betty will recite Thoreau or Emerson to you dreamily, and ask you whether you think you're what you could have been had you been other than what you are—or words to that effect."

Phillip looked frightened.

"I reckon you'd better let me have that end seat," he said dejectedly. "I don't know how to talk about Emerson or Thoreau. I didn't even know he pronounced his name that way—Thoreau, I mean. They'll think I'm an awful fool, won't they?"

"Cheer up!" laughed Kingsford. "Maybe they won't guess it. Anyhow, I promise not to tell."

On the Tuesday evening preceding the game Phillip went with Chester and Guy to the Union and fought his way with them to seats in the rear of the Common Room, denuded of its rugs and tables and easy-chairs for the occasion. The room was crowded to suffocation long before the meeting was to begin, and the air was blue with tobacco smoke that wreathed and eddied fantastically about the big chandelier of spreading antlers. The enthusiasm was already bubbling, and the fellows were whistling softly and talking and rustling the slips on which were printed the words of the songs they were to practise. A platform had been erected at one end of the room, in front of the big fireplace and under the bust of John Harvard, and onto it there presently filed the speakers and an assortment of coaches. The Senior Class President, as master of ceremonies,

led the cheering that thundered up against the paneled walls and ceiling: first for the President of the University; then for a well-loved and kindly faced man whose generosity had made possible the building of the Union; then for another who had given liberally; and then for the coaches, one after another, and the team, and, lastly, for "Harvard! Harvard! Harvard!"

The speakers spoke, the band played, and 1,400 men cheered joyously. Phillip looked about him at the earnest faces bent forward in close attention to the speakers or thrown slightly back to give vent to the deep-voiced cheers and felt an odd, unaccustomed warming at the heart and a sort of tingling in his veins. There was an atmosphere of comradeship there that was good to feel. He wondered if the others were experiencing the same glow of good-fellowship and patriotism that he was. He was certain Chester was. As to Guy he could not be so sure. He was leaning back with half-closed eyes, puffing hard on a little blackened briar pipe. For awhile Phillip forgot the speaker and his eyes ranged about the room, seeking out the panels which, here and there, were carved with the names of men whom their alma mater was proud to so honour. Perhaps,

he dreamed, some day his own name would stand out from one of the oaken panels. He picked one out, modestly choosing one far up in a corner, and tried to picture the words "Phillip Scott Ryerson" thereon, and wondered whether the decorations would be of oak leaves or laurel or what.

His musings were suddenly interrupted by a burst of long-drawn "A-a-ays," that soft, exhaled applause peculiar to college men. Then the cheers burst forth again, and the fellow on his left, a fellow whom he had never seen before, brought his hand down with a resounding smack on Phillip's knee; and then, instead of apologizing, only smiled and nodded; and Phillip smiled back as though it was quite the most natural thing in the world. After the speeches were finished the band had its innings, and the junior who had borne the crimson megaphone in the march to the field climbed onto the platform and told them earnestly that the singing had got to be improved and that they would start off with "Glory for the Crimson," and please wouldn't every fellow learn all the songs by heart? And every fellow declared loudly that he would; and the band struck up, the leader waved his hands and the assembly broke forth into:

“ Raise the Crimson ensign to the place it held of yore !
In the loyal spirit that shall live forevermore !
The sun will set in Crimson as the sun has set before !
For this is Harvard's day ! ”

After it was all over, after they had stood and sung “Fair Harvard” through—most of them repeating the words of the first verse over and over, for the reason that it is a matter of precedent never to know anything but the first verse—after he had dropped Guy in the square, Phillip went home and, seizing pen and paper impatiently, told “Dear little Mamma and Margey” all about it.

CHAPTER X

UNDER a leaden sky, buffeted by an icy wind from the east, some thirty-four thousand persons huddled upon the towering stands that completely inclosed the field, shivering under coats and rugs and furs, stamping their chilled feet, and all the while, in the manner of Anglo-Americans, laughing at physical discomfort so long as athletic prowess was the reward.

The bare, unlovely expanses of yellow pine boards were no longer visible. From the gridiron the sloping banks of humanity might, for all evidence the eye could obtain, have hidden tiers of marble seats like some huge amphitheatre of old. The effect was of substantiality and permanence.

The sky was colourless, the earth dun. Nature was in a mood of somberness and showed no favouritism; neither crimson nor blue was included in her colour scheme. But within the crowded inclosure the scene was brightly tinted. The upward sloping backgrounds were dull and sad enough, to be sure—

gray and brown, and black; but against them everywhere, from corner to corner, from top to bottom, trembled specks of crimson and blue like roses and gentians fluttering in the wind. Nearer at hand the blossoms resolved themselves into flags, ribbons and bouquets. Even the score-cards added their touches of colour, while thousands of bright red megaphones and hundreds of toy crimson balloons bobbed and swayed. The north stand was darkly cerulean from end to end; the south stand warmly, deeply red; while the end tiers owned allegiance to Harvard save where, here and there, a Yale banner flaunted defiantly like a sapphire set amidst rubies.

There was sound as well as colour. Thirty-four thousand voices arose in talk and laughter, song and cheer. Near the centre of the south side was a table. On the table stood the junior with the crimson megaphone. In front of him was the band, increased in numbers since its last appearance, and beyond the band, stretching upward and away to the sky line, was the cheering section. When the megaphone waved the band played and a thousand voices sang. After the songs came cheers, stately, thunderous, roared out from thousands of lusty throats.

Across the field, on the north side, every vocal challenge was accepted. Yale sang and shouted her slogans incessantly. Her numbers were fewer, but there were strong lungs behind the deep blue banners, and when a handful of blue-stockinged warriors ran into sight it was as though New Haven and not Cambridge was the scene of battle. The throngs at the entrances had thinned out now, and numbed fingers were drawing watches from pockets hidden under many thicknesses of coats and mufflers. And then onto the rectangle of faded turf trotted a little squad of men in nice new black sweaters adorned with crimson H's, and pandemonium broke loose. And when, after many minutes, comparative quiet settled over the scene, a whistle blew shrilly, and Harvard and Yale were again at battle.

It is safe to say that of that host of onlookers there was only one who did not see the Yale leftguard send the ball corkscrewing to Harvard's fifteen-yard line and into the arms of the Harvard captain. John North, watching from the side line, saw it; David Meadowcamp, sitting beside his father and for once wide awake, saw it; Chester and Guy, enthroned half-way up the cheering section, saw it; Everett Kingsford saw it; Miss Mildred Wayland,

who sat beside him; and the obliging Muir; and Kingsford's mother; and his sister Betty. The one who did not see it was Phillip.

He was looking at Betty.

Phillip had spent the morning in a condition of funk. He wished heartily that he hadn't agreed to Kingsford's request; the prospect of sitting for two hours between an elderly woman who would tell him of Everett's infantile adventures and maladies and a girl who would talk to him about Thoreau and Emerson and — horror of horrors!—possibly his soul, was appalling. Thoreau and Emerson didn't interest him greatly as yet, and being a very healthy young gentleman, with a good digestion and scant knowledge of such a thing as a liver, he never considered his soul at all. The idea of being taken suddenly ill with some strange and serious ailment occurred to him, but as that would necessitate his remaining away from the game, since tickets were at a prohibitive price, he gave it up. To miss the smallest portion of the contest was not to be thought of for an instant; better far to perish a victim to friendship.

He was to meet Kingsford and his party in the square at half past one. Most of the fellows at his

table were either having lunch in town or heroically braving the restaurants in company with friends or relatives, and Phillip had the table practically to himself. The question whether to wear a nice new rain-coat or an old ulster had bothered him all the forenoon, and he had decided in favour of the ulster. But after lunch a sudden realization of its unloveliness came to him, and he stole back to his room by way of Mount Auburn Street, so as not to encounter Kingsford in the square, and donned the rain-coat. A girl is a girl, he reflected, even if she talks philosophy and psychology !

He found Kingsford waiting for him, surrounded by three ladies and a retiring fellow who, he supposed, must be Muir. Kingsford accused him of tardiness in one breath and introduced him to the rest of the party in another; and then started them off uncereemoniously through the throng in the direction of Soldiers' Field. Phillip found himself with Mrs. Kingsford, and after a first moment of bewilderment realized that his picture of a rather garrulous elderly and white-haired lady was all wrong. Everett's mother looked to be about twenty-five, and was so beautiful and so gracious that Phillip would have forgiven her had she launched at once into a catalogue

of the diseases of children and their remedies. But she did nothing of the sort. Instead she talked charmingly of everyday affairs, whimsically anticipated being ill for weeks to come as a result of sitting outdoors in such weather, asked one or two sensible questions regarding football, good-naturedly criticized the persons and objects they passed in their mad, headlong career out Boylston Street, and was altogether so captivating that by the time they had fought their way into the grounds Phillip's one desire in life was to sit beside her and listen to her for the rest of the afternoon.

When they reached their seats, after a long and tedious climb which Kingsford declared was harder than ascending the Jungfrau, Muir, who had walked with Betty from the square, was detailed to the farther seat. Kingsford sent his mother in next, then Phillip, followed by Betty, Miss Wayland and himself. It was not until then that Phillip had a fair look at the young lady who was to talk Emerson and Thoreau to him. And it was then that he experienced his second surprise. Betty Kingsford was small, rather slight, with a good deal of very rebellious hair of a light brown shade which Phillip didn't remember ever having seen before, and which

was continually being blown across her face and continually drawn away again. Her eyes were deeply brown. Phillip discovered this just after Harvard had made her first touchdown, and the discovery, for some inexplicable reason, came to him as a shock and seemed for weeks afterward to be the most wonderful and momentous discovery of recent years. Her cheeks were like—well, to use Phillip's own simile, a simile which he honestly believed he had invented, they were like wild pink roses. When she laughed, which was frequently, she showed a number of small and very even teeth of marvelous whiteness. When she smiled, which was pretty much all the time, she caused a dimple to appear on each cheek. After that day the tune of "Up the Street" was associated in Phillip's mind with pink cheeks and dimples, laughing brown eyes, and wind-loosened tresses. Phillip's chronology of the game would, if written, run something like this:

2 P. M. First spoke to Miss Kingsford.

2:15 Discovered that her eyes were dark-brown and that her hair was the colour of beech leaves in autumn.

2:25 The left-hand dimple is a trifle deeper than the right-hand dimple.

2:30 She has the nicest, rippling sort of a laugh you ever heard.

2:45 Our hands touched under the rug; I don't think she knew it.

2:55 She likes Virginia and has been in our part of it.

3:05 She dropped her score-card. It went under the seat and she accepted mine.

3:15 She is going to make Everett give a tea in his room some afternoon. I am to be there.

3:30 She leaned across me to talk to her mother and her hair blew against my face. It smelled awfully sweet, like violets or—or something.

3:40 We all stood up and shouted and waved our arms. When we sat down again she let me tuck the rug about her. She laughed.

3:50 I am going to call some afternoon. And I am to go in for dinner some night; her mother asked me.

3:55 When we got up I found her score-card and she said I might keep it. I kept it. Harvard won. I don't know the score.

If you were to remonstrate with Phillip about the incompleteness of this history of what was a great and, from a Harvard viewpoint, a glorious event, he

would probably tell you to read the papers. And I shall do the same. In them you will find a very succinct and interesting account of that game, with all sorts of pictures made the day before and wonderful and confusing diagrams showing where the ball was every minute of the time. But they won't tell you what Betty said when Phillip expressed a fear that she was cold, nor what Phillip answered when Betty asked him if he danced, nor how Betty looked when Phillip asked if she would mind very much if he called some old day. But, for that matter, neither will I.

Between the halves, when the day was already won and frantic wearers of the Crimson were shouting themselves hoarse, and delighted coaches were thumping each other's shoulders and shaking hands on the slightest excuse; when the last of the liberated toy balloons were speeding off into the gray distance and the *tramp, tramp* of numbed feet made a martial accompaniment to the joyous talk and laughter, Everett Kingsford leaned over and addressed himself to Phillip.

"How do you and Betty agree on Emerson?" he asked gravely.

"Emerson?" Phillip stared blankly.

"Emerson? Who is he?" Betty looked perplexed.

Kingsford laughed and turned back to Miss Wayland.

Phillip could hear him talking in low tones to her and presently she was laughing softly. Betty demanded to be told. Betty's demands were already law. Phillip explained. Betty frowned charmingly.

"Everett's always making fun of me," she declared. "I'm afraid you've already discovered how ignorant I am, Mr. Ryerson. I—I don't know a thing, really and truly! Do you care *much* for Emerson and Thoreau?"

"Hate them both," answered Phillip heartily.

"Oh, but you mustn't *hate* them!"

"Mustn't I?"

"No; you must just not care a great deal for them."

"Very well, I don't care a great deal for them, Miss Kingsford."

"That's nice," answered Betty, apparently much relieved. "I respect them both, of course, and think they were really very great men, but I don't think people have any right to talk about them the way they do. Now that they're dead, why can't they be left in peace?"

"I know. It's—it's mighty mean, I think."

"Yes. Then you're not—not disappointed?" asked Betty. "You don't *mind* if I don't talk to you about your soul, and Emerson, and the other man?"

"Disappointed!" cried Phillip. "I'm mightily pleased."

"Honestly? And you don't think I'm frightfully ignorant?"

"I think—I think——"

"Yes?"

Phillip was looking at her very, very ardently and Betty dropped her dark-brown eyes and studied her score-card.

"I think you're——" But there he stopped again. He didn't dare.

"Aren't you going to tell me?" asked Betty in apparent surprise. She darted a glance at him and straightway decided not to press the subject. There are more fitting places than a crowded grand stand for hearing certain things.

"I'll—I'll tell you some day," answered Phillip softly.

"O-oh!" murmured Betty. "I suppose, then, I shall have to wait, shan't I?" she asked cheerfully.

Phillip wished she had exhibited a less philosophic spirit.

"Oh, I daresay you don't care very much what I think," he said rather aggrievedly. Betty shook her head and for the hundredth time pushed a lock of pale brown hair from her face.

"But I do, of course," she answered gravely. "I like people to think—well of me, and especially Everett's friends."

"Oh," said Phillip. Then, with elaborate carelessness, "I suppose he has lots of friends, hasn't he?"

"M-m, yes, a good many, I guess."

"And—er—do they all—that is——"

"Like me?" asked Betty without embarrassment. "I don't know, I'm sure. And—and I don't care whether some do, after all. I guess it's only the ones I like that—I like to have like me." She laughed merrily. "Can you understand all that rigmarole?"

"You said you cared what I thought," said Phillip rashly.

"Did I?"

"Didn't you?"

"I may have. Why?"

"Oh—why, because if you care what I think and

you only care what people that you like think, why—why——”

“Oh, dear,” cried Betty, “that’s worse than Emerson! And you know I don’t care a great deal for Emerson.”

“Nor me, I reckon,” muttered Phillip. Betty turned a look of surprise upon him.

“But I’ve only known you half an hour!” she objected.

“It’s nearly an hour,” corrected Phillip.

“Really? It doesn’t seem that long, does it?”

“No!” he answered fervently. And was comforted.

Yes, dear reader, that is a very fair sample of their discourse; not startlingly interesting to you, or to me, but to Phillip one of the most brilliant, absorbing conversations ever held since Adam and Eve first exchanged views on the weather. When the game was over and Phillip had piloted Betty down the steps as carefully as though she had been a piece of favrile glass instead of the very healthy and able young lady she was, and when they had paused for a moment to view the tempestuous scene before them, in which a dozen or so of crimson-sleeved players rose and sank in a sea of swaying enthusiasts, Betty turned to him.

"Wasn't it glorious!" she cried.

And Phillip, looking straight into her eyes, and having in mind something entirely apart from the victory, answered simply and sincerely:

"Great!"

CHAPTER XI

PHILLIP awoke the next forenoon with the sun shining warmly across his face, the church bells tolling and Tudor Maid anxiously awaiting breakfast. His first feeling was one of dissatisfaction at the nastiness of his mouth and the heaviness of his head. But before his eyes had blinked twice the memory of the preceding afternoon came to him. He smiled happily, turned over, laid his tousled brown head on one arm and stared unseeingly at the chimney of the next house. Twenty minutes passed. Maid arose, sniffed inquiringly at his hand, sighed, and flopped herself down again in the patch of sunlight. Phillip laughed aloud at some recollection and woke himself from his dreaming. Jumping blithely out of bed, he fed Maid from the store of biscuits kept in the closet for just such emergencies—a repast which the dog accepted under protest—took his bath and dressed himself, singing "Up the Street" martially and pausing suddenly in the middle of a bar to stand

motionless and smile idiotically at his reflection in the mirror.

Phillip was in love. And he knew it. And he wouldn't have been in any other condition for all the wealth of the world.

He was riotously happy; happy in spite of the fact that he had made a fool of himself the evening before, that his head felt as though it had been bored open and filled with lead, that his mouth, in spite of numerous draughts of water cold from the bathroom faucet, tasted as he imagined the inside of a brass pipe must taste, that he would have to go to a restaurant for breakfast, and that he didn't want breakfast anyway.

He took Maid with him to a subterraneous lunch room in the square and fed her lamb chops and doughnuts, finding that his own appetite refused anything save coffee and toast. Afterward—it was too late for church—he walked up the avenue past Porter's Station, struck off northward and got lost in darkest Somerville. Maid had a glorious time of it, and Phillip, when he at last reached The Inn for lunch, found that he had walked the lead out of his head and the bad taste from his mouth. When he had finished his

lunch he went upstairs and found John and Laurence Baker.

"Are you going back to your room?" he asked the former. "I want to see you for a few minutes."

"All right. Sit down. Have you had lunch?"

"Yes," answered Phillip. "I'll wait for you." He sprawled himself out on the window-seat in the sunlight and tried to interest himself in the Sunday paper, aware all the while that Baker was eyeing him quizzically across the table.

"Have you seen my kid brother lately, Ryerson?" asked Baker presently.

"I was with him last night," answered Phillip from behind the sheet. "We were in town."

"Ah; indeed? Haven't seen him this morning yet?"

"No."

"Well, you ought to!" Baker pushed back his chair, grinning broadly. At the sideboard he took up the water pitcher and stared dolefully into its empty depths. "I say, John, has it ever occurred to you that Cambridge water is at times awfully dry? I'll swear I've got away with six glasses and my throat's still sizzling. Well, so long."

When he had gone Phillip tossed aside the paper

and faced John. The latter met his look calmly and poured himself another glass of milk.

"Well, Phil, we came out on top," he said.

"Yes. I reckon you're mightily pleased. And—
and every one."

"Pleased is no name for it; we're in the seventh heaven of delight. It was beautifully decisive, you see; there were no freaks of luck; it was all straight football, with every score well earned. This is my last year here, and I'm glad we finished up with a victory. It sort of rounds out things, if you know what I mean."

"Yes." Phillip stared absently at his hands. Then he faced John again. "Look here, John, tell me about last night. Did I—was I very bad?"

"Fair to middling," answered the other. "How did it happen, Phil?"

"Oh, I don't quite know. Chester said we'd ought to go into town for dinner. You see, we had seats for the theatre, and—we went to some queer dives and ate a lot of nasty stuff and drank—quite a bit; some sort of white wine. No, we had cocktails first. We met Guy Bassett and Boerick and Frazer and some other fellows at the theatre, and we went out and drank some more stuff. I reckon

it was champagne; I don't remember. Then the others went off somewhere and Chester and I sat down—no, we didn't sit down, because some fellows had our seats and wouldn't get out. That's what started it."

"I see."

"Yes. We told them we had the checks and they said we'd have to show them. I had mine, but Chester couldn't find his. So he grabbed the nearest fellow—the seats were on the aisle—and pulled him onto the floor and yelled for me to slug the other chap. So I slugged him. By that time every one was standing up and telling us to 'Go it, Bill,' and then they began to crowd around us. I don't know just what happened, but the other fellow and I were having it under the seats. There wasn't room to do anything except hold on to each other, and so we did that and called each other names. I remember he said I was a 'contumelious cub,' only he was drunk and couldn't say it plain, and that made me mad, and——"

"And Davy and I dragged you both out by your heels and got you away from the strong arm of the law," finished John. "We had some trouble doing it. Chester insisted on fighting the whole

crowd and that nearly queered us. We had just managed to make them understand that it was all fun, when it dawned on him that there were police present and that it was his bounden duty to do them up. But it ended all right. We got you and Chester into a hack and brought you home. What became of Kingsford and that tall, black-haired youngster I don't know. But I guess they got off all right."

"Kingsford?" asked Phillip, drawing his brows together. "Was he there?"

"Was he there! Do you mean that you didn't know it was Kingsford you were mauling under the seats?"

Phillip groaned.

"Honest, John?"

"Honest Injun."

"I must have been pretty bad. I didn't recognize him at all. Why, he's—he's a chum!" John smiled.

"Chum, eh? And you were just showing him how much you loved him, I suppose? Well, it's all past now, Phil. I'm not sure, though, that it isn't my duty as your—hem—guardian, Phil, to read you a short lecture."

"Go ahead. I wish you would. I wish you'd kick me! I—oh, hang it, John, I'm an awful dunce!"

"Well, let's get outdoors. Now, I'm not altogether the right kind to lecture any one on the subject of getting drunk, Phil. Unless, as I've seen it stated, experience is necessary to the making of a good preacher. In my own coltish days I made a bit of an ass of myself. As a freshman I thought it was incumbent on me to drink a good deal, and I have unpleasant recollections of three occasions when—well, when I made as big a fool of myself as it is allowed any man. So you see, Phil, if you emulate my example you've got two more coming to you. Only—well, I think I'd pattern myself on some one else and let the other two go by forfeit."

They had reached Little's and John led the way to his room, explaining that David had returned to New York with his father. He pushed a window wide open and thrust a chair up to it, taking the window-seat himself, clasping his big, brown hands over his knees. Phillip, looking at the clear-cut features and kindly, honest eyes, tried to associate them with scenes of drunken orgies, and failed.

"I don't believe you were ever nasty-drunk, John!" he declared warmly and with conviction. John turned, smiling, and read some of the admiration in the other's eyes.

"Nonsense," he said. "I've been just as much of a brute as other chaps. Don't try to make a hero of me, Phil; I'm poor stuff."

"I don't believe it," answered Phillip, doggedly.

"Don't? Well—I'm glad you don't, old man. I like people to like me and I want you to if you can."

Phillip smiled at a recollection. "I reckon you like people that you like to like you?" he asked.

"That's it," answered John, reflecting the smile. "And that means I like you, Phillip of Virginia."

"Oh! I didn't mean that!" protested Phillip. "I—I was just quoting somebody."

"All right; you needn't apologize. Now, about last night. As I was saying, you can get drunk pretty often, if you want to, without being any worse than some other fellows in college who are well liked and respected. But it won't do you a speck of good, Phil, not a speck. And life is such a short track at the most that I don't believe a fellow has time to do negative things. The mere fact that a thing's not going to harm you doesn't make it

worth doing; stick to the things that will produce some good, that will better you if only a little. After all, it isn't especially necessary to get drunk. I don't believe that a fellow who drinks more than is good for him is any manlier than the fellow who doesn't. Besides, it's an expensive habit, drinking."

"It is," agreed Phillip dolefully.

"Well?"

"Oh, I've quit, John; honestly! Last night was enough. I hate to see other fellows make beasts of themselves and I hate to think that I've gone and done it myself. I don't mean that I'm going to become a total abstainer, for I don't think that's necessary, do you? We have always had wine on the table at home and—and I've never thought much about it. Down our way we ride hard and drink the same way. But I think you're right about it, John, and—and I'm going to take mighty good care that it doesn't happen again."

"All right, Phil. By the way, have you heard from your folks lately?"

"Yes, I had a letter Friday."

"All well, I hope?"

"Yes; except mamma. You know she's right poorly all the time."

"I beg your pardon; I'd forgotten."

"Margey wrote that they were both counting the days until Christmas. I'm beginning to look forward to going home, too."

"Yes. I wish my folks were going to be at home for Christmas. A fellow feels rather out of it if he can't spend Christmas by his own fireside. As it is, I suppose I'll go home with Davy for a few days."

"I wish you'd come with me," cried Phillip, eagerly.

"Thanks; that's awfully nice of you. But I don't believe a chap's folks care very much about having strangers around at Christmas."

"Why, mamma and Margey would be awfully pleased," declared Phillip. "I wish you would come. Of course, we're not so swell as David, I reckon, but I could show you a good time. We could get up a fox hunt, and maybe there'd be some partridges left. Will you?"

"Hm; you tempt me sorely, my child. But— Well, we'll think it over."

"I'm sure there'll be some birds," continued Phillip, "for Margey wrote that Nate Willis was staying there for a few days and that he'd had good shooting."

"Who's Nate Willis, may I ask?"

"Nate? Well, he's one of the Richmond Willises, you know."

"Indeed? And am I to presume from that that he's a person of family and prominence?"

"Yes, I reckon so. We're related in some way; mamma knows."

"And is—er—is he a frequent caller at your place?"

"Oh, he comes up right often."

"I see." John drew his feet off the cushion and sat up. "On second thoughts, Phil, I'm not sure that I won't accept your invitation now. At any rate, you might sound your folks and see what they think of entertaining a stranger for a couple of days."

"But you're not exactly a stranger, you know," said Phillip.

"Thank you, old man. What do you say to a short walk?"

So they strolled through the Yard, across the Delta and down Divinity Avenue under arching boughs, bare save for an occasional yellow leaf twirling lazily about in the afternoon breeze. They crossed Norton's Field, rustling through the little patch of woodland, and turned back by Irving

Street, pausing to admire the park-like expanse whereon are grouped four highly satisfactory examples of public building architecture. John pointed out the high school and the Latin school, and the public library on one side and the manual training school on the other, and Phillip looked them over for a minute and then said:

“Now I understand why you folks here in New England are so intellectual and cultured and all that. Shucks! You can’t help being smart and knowing a heap with all your fine schools and libraries and things. Considering the advantages you have, I’m not sure you’re not all powerful ignorant. Why, a fellow couldn’t help learning how to carpenter in a place like that!” He nodded toward the hospitable red brick building beside them. “Come on; I’m disgusted with you. You’re a stupid lot up here. As my nigger mammy used to say, ‘You ain’t got as much sense as a toad-frog; an’ ev’ybody knows that a toad-frog’s th’ ignerantes’ thing as is!’”

At the Colonial Club John piloted Phillip upstairs to the big, comfortable and unpretentious reading-room where, over a pot of tea and through the gray smoke of a couple of very black cigars, they dis-

cussed subjects as multifarious and inconsequent as those suggested by the walrus.

Phillip did not encounter Everett Kingsford until Monday night, at the dinner table. Phillip looked sheepish, and Everett, rising ceremoniously, saluted him gravely.

"Sir, I will apologize if you will," he said.

"I didn't recognize you at all," declared Phillip earnestly. "I didn't know it was you until North told me yesterday. I'm awfully sorry, honestly."

"Say no more. But let this be a warning to you never to raise your hand to your elders again."

"You—you weren't hurt, were you?" asked Phillip anxiously. The thought of having engaged in combat with Betty's brother was harrowing and savoured of sacrilege.

"Not a bit. How about you?"

"Nor I." Presently he asked: "Your mother is well, I hope?"

"Quite." And Kingsford grinned exasperatingly. "And so is Miss Wayland, I believe; and Muir. And so am I."

Phillip applied himself diligently to his soup and strove to look unconcerned.

"Isn't soup a beautiful thing?" asked Kingsford.

Phillip smiled in spite of himself.

"You're mighty cute, aren't you?" he asked scathingly.

"So-so; at least, I know the symptoms."

"What symptoms?"

"Tut, tut, my boy; don't blush!"

"Oh, go to thunder. How's Miss Kingsford?"

"Brave and honest youth! I have the pleasure of informing you that my sister's health is much the same as when you last saw her some forty-eight hours ago."

"Oh!"

"I'll tell her you said so," murmured Kingsford politely.

"Well, now, look here. I was asked to dinner at your place. And I accepted. I wish you'd hurry things along. I'm awfully hungry."

"Hm; well, I'll see what can be done. But meanwhile, why don't you go in and call on Betty and get the edge off your appetite?"

"I'm going to."

"The deuce you are! And I've been thinking of you as a shy and retiring youth! Why, Betty told me that she couldn't get a word out of you all during the game."

"She didn't!"

"Didn't she?" Kingsford grinned again. "Well, maybe she didn't, then. I guess I won't tell you what she said."

"Go on, like a good fellow! What was it?"

"It was in confidence, my boy. Do you think for a moment that I am one to betray a sister's confidence? Heaven forbid!"

"Please!"

"What'll you give me?"

"I refuse to bribe you. I'll ask her."

"I would. She's sure to tell you. Listen, then. She said you were a nice boy but frightfully cheeky."

Phillip moulded a slice of graham bread into a round wad and let drive. Kingsford dodged and it took one of the fellows at the far end of the table on the cheek. In the fracas which inevitably followed Kingsford made his escape.

Phillip made his call on Wednesday afternoon, taking good care not to appraise Kingsford of his intention, since the latter had solicitously offered to accompany him and by his presence remove some of the embarrassment. The Kingsford residence on Marlborough Street was very broad of front, very high of steps and very aristocratic of aspect,

despite the fact that its stone and brick were faded and discoloured by age. An oriel window, quite palpably an addition of recent years, hung out over the doorway and was filled with ferns and carnations in profuse bloom.

Phillip was ushered into a surprisingly modern drawing-room and was presently joined by Mrs. Kingsford. During the next five minutes Phillip watched the hall door anxiously until his hostess, divining his thoughts, remarked:

"I'm very sorry that Elizabeth is not at home this afternoon. She is taking her painting lesson. She studies with Warrenton, the flower painter, and really does excellently, we think. Besides, she enjoys it greatly and it gives her something to interest her. I tell her I'm certain she must inherit her talent from me, Mr. Ryerson, for I used to do the most beautiful pink and yellow roses on plush plaques when I was her age! I used to think them very lovely."

"I'm sure they were," said Phillip earnestly.

After the first moment of blank dismay and disappointment, Phillip, to his credit be it said, set out to make himself agreeable to Betty's mother and succeeded admirably. He had the true Southern

reverence and courtesy toward women which, combined in his case with a youthful shyness, Mrs. Kingsford found grateful and even flattering. When he arose to go and took the hand she offered him he bent over it, as he had seen his father bend over his mother's hand all his life, almost as though he was going to touch his lips to it. Mrs. Kingsford smiled.

"Nice boy," she said to herself; and aloud: "You mustn't forget that you're to come in to dinner some night soon. Everett will know better than I what evening will be convenient to you, and so I shall leave it to him. But don't let him put it off too long. I want you to meet Mr. Kingsford; he likes young men; I believe he almost thinks he's one himself. And if it's not greatly out of your way, Mr. Ryerson, you might walk toward the Public Garden. It's just possible that you'll meet Elizabeth coming home. It's about time, I think, and I know she'd be sorry to have missed you altogether."

Phillip threw her a glance eloquent of gratitude.

"I will then," he replied. "She couldn't be nearly as sorry as I."

Fortune favours the persevering. At the end of Phillip's third trip between the house and the

equestrian statue of Washington—for Mrs. Kingsford had not limited him to one excursion—he spied Betty, a captivating figure in walking skirt and Norfolk jacket, swinging toward him across the bridge. Phillip hurried toward her on the principle that the farther from home he met her the longer he would have to walk beside her. She greeted him quite without embarrassment and gave him a small hand encased in a gray glove of undressed kid that was so soft and snugly feeling that it was an effort to release it. Her cheeks were glowing, and the light brown hair, escaping from under a jaunty felt hat, was frisking about just as he remembered it.

“I’ve been to call,” he announced.

“Have you? I’m sorry I was out. You saw my mother?”

“Yes.” Then in a burst of admiration: “She’s mighty good and kind, isn’t she?” Betty looked surprised.

“Why, of course she is. But——”

“You see, she told me that I might find you if I came this way.”

“Oh,” said Betty, “did she?” They were walking toward the house. Phillip was dawdling disgracefully.

"Yes; and so I came this way—three times." He looked to see how she would accept this proof of devotion and was rewarded with the sight of a little demure smile.

"You—you were very kind to waste your time on me," she replied gravely.

"Betty!"

Phillip was certain afterward, when he thought it over, that he didn't say it—that it just escaped in the manner and with all the unexpectedness of a Jack-in-the-box when the latch is loosed. Betty shot a sudden glance at him and then looked across the street. Phillip took a long breath.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said earnestly. "I didn't mean—— It came out, you know!" Betty laughed a trifle nervously, her face still averted.

"Yes, it did 'come out,' didn't it?" she asked. Then, severely, coldly: "Is it the custom in Virginia, Mr. Ryerson, to address girls by their—their first names the second time you meet them?"

"No," answered Phillip, miserably. "And I'm very sorry. Won't you—can't you forgive me?"

"Perhaps; if—" Betty turned and observed him frowningly—"if it doesn't happen again."

"Ever?"

"Why," faltered Betty, "why—of course. Aren't we silly? Won't you come in?"

They had reached the house and Betty placed one small foot in its patent leather Oxford on the lowest step. Phillip glanced from the Oxford to the oriel window doubtfully.

"Wouldn't your mother think I was—cheeky?" he asked.

"She'd think you were cheekier if you kept me on the steps," answered Betty.

"Well, then let's walk," he suggested boldly.

"I think I ought to go in," answered Betty. And so she took the Oxford from the lowest step and moved off up the sidewalk with him.

"Do *you* think I'm awfully cheeky?" asked Phillip.

"I? Why?"

"Your brother said you did."

"Oh, please don't pay any attention to what Everett says about me. He's liable to tell you anything. What—what did he say?"

"Oh, I reckon he was just fooling. He said—he said you said——"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Betty. "More Emerson!"

"That I was a nice boy, but frightfully cheeky."

"The idea! I never said anything of the kind. What I did say——"

"Please tell me, won't you?"

"No, I shan't. It wasn't anything, really. But you mustn't pay any attention to Everett. He's——"

"A nice boy, but untruthful?"

"Yes," laughed Betty. "We must go back now."

"Must we? And won't you tell me what you said?"

"Certainly not," she answered, severely.

"Never?" pleaded Phillip.

Betty relented.

"Perhaps some day."

"Next time I see you?"

"Hardly. Good-by." She held out her hand and Phillip seized it as though it were the only thing between him and death by drowning.

"Well, but—I may come again?"

"If you like."

"When?"

"Some afternoon when I'm at home?" asked Betty innocently.

"Of course! Only—only when are you at home?"

Betty creased her forehead charmingly and thought deeply.

"I'm pow'ful unsartin', I'm afraid. But—I'm usually at home on Thursday."

"Thursday!" cried Phillip. "But to-morrow's Thursday, and the next one's a week off! More than a week!"

"Why, so it is!" she laughed. "What shall we do about it?"

"Oh, of course you don't care," he grumbled.

"I do if you do," she said contritely. "We'll alter the calendar."

"How?" he asked eagerly.

"Why, we'll have a week from to-morrow come on—let me see!—on Monday. Will that do?"

"Really? And will you be at home?"

Betty nodded. Phillip held forth his hand again.

"But we've said good-by once," she demurred.

"Let's say it again."

He watched her until the door had closed and then swung gaily toward Cambridge. He would walk back, he told himself, because the car had yet to be made that was large enough to hold him.

CHAPTER XII

ON Friday at three o'clock Phillip strode through the crowd of bundle-laden men and women in front of the waiting-room in the square and, stationing himself on the curbstone under John's front window, gazed upward and yelled lustily until John stuck his head out and said:

"Shut up or you'll wake Davy. Come on up."

So Phillip climbed the stairs—something he might have done in the first place had it not been contrary to established custom—and found David snoring in an armchair with a lap full of books and John sorting out some golf clubs.

"I'm going up to the links with Larry Baker. Want to come along? Fresh air'll do you good."

"Can't," answered Phillip; "I've got to shoot. We begin at three. What time is it?"

"Three ten."

"Really? I'll have to hurry, won't I?" He sat down and brought forth a letter from one of his pockets. "I got this a little while ago. It's from

Margey. You know I wrote them on Sunday that I was going to bring you home with me for Christmas if you'd come, and this is what Margey says. Let's see. . . . Um! . . . Here it is: 'Mamma is so pleased at the prospect of seeing Mr. North and wants you to tell him for her that he will be very welcome for as long as he cares to stay. And she thinks you should explain that her health will not allow her to write to him in person. She fears he will consider her ungrateful for his kindness. You must tell him, Phil dear, that we are plain folks nowadays, and that Elaine is not very exciting. We wouldn't want him to be disappointed, would we? Mamma says we must get up a dance or something for him. Does he like dancing? I have been wondering——' Er, that's all, I reckon. The rest is just nonsense."

"Do you mean to tell me that your sister can write nonsense, Phil?" asked John.

"Why, yes; why?"

"No reason why she shouldn't, of course. Only I'd somehow got the idea that she was an extremely dignified and serious-minded young lady."

"Oh, Margey's serious-minded, I reckon—at times. But she's silly, too. All girls are, aren't

they? That is," amended Phillip, thinking of Betty, "most girls are. I know one that isn't."

"Hello!" said John, pausing in the act of pulling on his golf boots. "I thought I could discern an unusual buoyancy about you of late. Not a college widow, I hope?"

"No, of course not. But I must be getting on. You'll come, won't you?"

"To Virginia? Yes, Phil. And when you write please thank your mother and—— How about your sister? Think she wants me to come?"

"Why, of course."

"Oh; I didn't gather that impression from what you read me. I believe she didn't mention herself, did she?"

"That doesn't make any difference. She'll be tickled to death."

"Think so? Well, I hope she won't mind having me. Don't let them put themselves out for me, Phil. Never mind the dance, you know; I'm getting too old for such frivolous things. As for excitement, why, we can do without that for a few days. Elaine offers me one inducement that is quite sufficient."

"You mean the shooting?" asked Phillip.

"Eh? Oh, yes; the shooting, of course. Let me see, Phil, we're to shoot—what is it? Ducks?"

"Why, no; partridge, of course," replied Phillip, gazing at the other in astonishment.

"To be sure; partridge. The partridge is an exasperating bird that always goes off like a watchman's rattle when you're not expecting it and leaves your nerves in a state of collapse. Yes, Phil, we will sally forth with dogs and guns and sandwiches and shoot the merry little partridge on its native heath. Does the Virginia partridge live on a heath, Phil?"

"Oh, you're crazy," answered the other in disgust. "I'm going now. But I'm awfully glad you're coming South, John; it's mighty good of you."

"Don't mention it. My regards to your folks when you write, and tell them I accept their kind invitation with a great deal of pleasure. So long. You said we were to shoot partridges, didn't you?"

"I reckon you're drunk," answered Phillip. "I must get on."

"So you've remarked several times. Don't let me hurry you."

There was no apparent danger of that, for Phillip, instead of rushing off, was strolling about the study

looking at the pictures as though they had suddenly acquired a new interest, and giving especial attention to the objects on the mantel. John watched him speculatively as he drew on his coat.

"Help yourself if you see anything you fancy," he said.

"I will, then." Phillip took a photograph from the mantel. "I'll take this; much obliged. Good-by."

"Hold on, there! What have you got?"

"Just an old photograph of you." He held it up.

"Oh; well, take it away. It's not beautiful, Phil, but I'm told it flatters me quite a bit. I presume I get one of you in return?"

"When I have any you do," laughed Phillip. "I'm off."

"Queer chap," mused John, when the door was closed. "Wonder why he wanted the picture?"

He put a couple of balls in his pocket and took up his bag. Then, his eye falling on the still slumbering David, he balanced six discarded clubs about him in such a way that they would topple to the floor at the slightest movement, and left the room.

Phillip wrote a letter that evening before dinner. One passage was as follows: "I'm sending a photo-

graph of him. He gave it to me to-day. He says it flatters him, but it doesn't really. I don't think it does him justice. Anyhow, it will tell you more than I could even if I answered all your questions. I don't see what difference it makes whether he's light or dark, anyhow. And I don't believe it was mamma that wanted to know. It sounds a heap more like Margey. Don't let any one shoot over the East Farm; I want some birds left for North. If Nate comes up again, tell him to shoot 'round the house; that's good enough for him, anyway."

November made a graceful exit under blue skies and to the music of soft breezes, and December tramped on in the manner of a stage villain, filming the shallows with ice and piling the snow high in the streets. That first storm held for Phillip an irresistible attraction. He watched it through the window of his room until it was almost dark; and then, tossing aside the books with which he had been pretending to study, he called Tudor Maid and together they went forth and faced the beating wind and the flying, needlelike sleet. Maid couldn't see the fun of it at first, but after Phillip had rolled her in a snowbank she, too, became imbued with the spirit of adventure and went bounding clumsily

ahead through the drifts with all the ludicrous abandon of a ten-weeks' puppy.

They followed the river, barely visible through the whirling mist, their path dimly outlined by the yellow lights that crept away into the gathering darkness in a far-reaching arc. They met no other wayfarers after they left the centre of the town, and, save for the occasional friendly gleam from house window and an infrequent car or snow-plow clanging and buzzing its way along, Phillip could have imagined himself back on one of his own country roads. At Mount Auburn they turned and struggled homeward, the wind at their backs now, and reached The Inn at half past six. Maid climbed onto a window seat, and with a long sigh of weariness and contentment went to sleep and snored peacefully until Phillip, his own appetite at length assuaged, woke her up to feast royally on roast beef.

But after a week of storm and stress December relented and—like the stage character it was representing—prepared for the final curtain of the year's drama by wearing the softened, chastened mien that, on the stage at least, precedes and heralds repentance. The days were cold, bright and invigourating,

and to Phillip, head over heels in love, formed a period of idyllic weather. It is probable, however, that Phillip would have accepted blizzard, deluge and cyclone with perfect cheerfulness so long as the roads that led to Boston were passable. For he had discovered that happiness for him was only another name for Betty Kingsford; and the pursuit of happiness occupied a great deal of his time and led his feet to Marlborough Street always once and often twice a week.

There was no false delicacy about Phillip's love-making. He was in love and didn't care who knew it. The Southern male creature accepts sentiment as a natural accompaniment to youth and is no more ashamed of being in love than he is of being a gentleman. If he doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve, at least he does not hide it in his boots. There was a frankness and wholesomeness about Phillip's wooing of Betty that appealed to Betty's people even while it amused them. Mrs. Kingsford considered it a boy and girl affair, loath to own even to herself that Betty had reached an age when her affections might become seriously engaged, and negatively countenanced it. Betty's father uttered a good many mild jokes at Betty's expense and pretended to be fearful

of an elopement. But he liked Phillip, and acknowledged to himself that if assiduity and perseverance counted for anything that youth had, an excellent chance of some day becoming his son-in-law. Everett, in the manner of the elder brother the world over, found in Betty's wooing food for much open amusement, and plagued both her and Phillip whenever possible, until he found that neither one minded it in the least. As for Betty herself, what she thought about it was difficult to tell. None knew save herself; Phillip least of all. Just so long as he was content to conceal his ardour under the semblance of ordinary friendship, Betty was kindness itself; admiration temperately expressed was received demurely and as a matter of course. But the first word of serious love-making summoned dire frowns and a chilliness of demeanour that cast Phillip into dismal abysses of doubt and despair, from which he was only rescued by the merciful Betty after repeated assertions of repentance and vows of future good behaviour. And thus December wore on and the Christmas recess approached.

Aside from Phillip's love affairs, the only incident concerning the persons of this story worthy of note is the election of John in mid-December to the office

of Class Day Secretary, and the selection, a week prior, of Guy Bassett for Vice-President of the Freshman Class. The latter event was duly celebrated in Guy's room at a Saturday night orgy of beer and cavendish. There was no poker. Of late—in fact, since Phillip had lost a month's allowance to Guy and had paid it with exemplary promptness—their host had on every occasion shown a strange disinclination for cards and had politely but firmly refused to produce them. To-night he offered a new explanation:

“As Vice-President of the Class, it behooves me to set an example of righteousness to you and Phil. The vice-presidency is an office created for a purpose, and that purpose is the moral betterment of the class. Although I say it who shouldn't, Chesty, the selection of myself for the position was a wise step. I am firmly convinced that I was cut out for a home missionary.”

“You be blowed,” answered Chester in disgust. “I saw you playing cards at the Union the other night.”

“Not poker, I swear!”

“What's the difference? Cards are cards, and——”

"Very well, old chap, cards *are* cards. Who's for a nice game of casino?"

Strange to relate, the suggestion was not well received.

About a week later Phillip found himself, to his surprise, engaged in packing a small trunk with apparel for the recess. The end of the term had come so suddenly that it found him rather bewildered and quite at a loss to know whether to welcome or regret its advent. His delight in the prospect of homecoming and of acting as host to John North was offset by his dismay at the idea of being parted from Betty for a fortnight. His leavetaking from that enigmatic young person had been far from satisfactory to him. It had been devoid of any of the solemnity and tender sadness that, to him at least, had appeared befitting. Betty had been more than usually high-spirited and matter-of-fact, and had refused to recognize the propriety of sentimental farewells. She had also scoffed at the notion of letter-writing.

"But you know I—I love you, Betty!" Phillip had pleaded.

Betty's smiling countenance froze instantly.

"I know you're a very silly boy," she had answered,

severely, "and a very untruthful one. You promised——"

"I know I did," Phillip had answered miserably. "But this is different, Betty; don't you see?"

"No, I don't see."

"But I'm going away——"

"For a week."

"For nearly two weeks! For a fortnight!" Somehow, fortnight sounded more eternal than two weeks. Betty, however, failed to see the distinction.

"You talk as though it were two years," she had replied scathingly

"Well, just the same, it's a powerful long time! If you'd write me just once, Betty, it——"

"Not a single letter! If you can't remember me for two weeks without seeing my handwriting I'm willing you should forget all about me."

"Remember you!" Phillip had exclaimed tragically. "Of course I shall remember you, Betty! It isn't that, only. Can't you understand——"

Betty couldn't. Neither could she understand that it was necessary that Phillip should kiss her good-by. He tried for a long, long while to explain this to her in such a way that she should discern

the imperative nature of it, but without success. In the end he had had to be content with a smiling handshake and a cheerful, undisturbed "Good-by, Phil," supplemented a moment later by an airy gesture from the drawing-room window that, at least so he found courage to believe, had resemblance to a kiss thrown from small finger tips. He had ridden back to Cambridge in a mood of mingled hope and despair, of happiness and pain—a mood which, although not recognizable as such at the time, is the sweetest of all a lover's many conditions.

He and John, with a good deal of hand luggage about them, and Tudor Maid between them, were driven into the Terminal one evening and there embarked on the Federal Express, Maid in a baggage car and John and Phillip in the Washington sleeper. John was in fine spirits; Phillip seemed depressed. In journeying it makes a difference whether the object of attraction is before or behind.

CHAPTER XIII

IF you cross the Potomac at Washington and journey westward for about fifty miles—allowing for the circuitous course taken by the railroad—you will reach Melville Court House in a trifle under two hours; always supposing, however, that the eastbound train isn't late at the junction, that there are no funeral parties aboard, and that the negroes whose duty it is to coal the tender just across the river have not gone off to Alexandria to spend the day. The first part of the journey lies through a country of low red-clay hills, clad with oak and rhododendron, a rather uninteresting country, where the farms have a mortgaged look and where unpainted structures cluster about the shedlike stations for no other apparent reason than that misery likes company. Yet away from the railroad and its artificial conditions soft stretches of hillside and meadow, interspersed with timbered creeks, hint of fairer and better things.

"It's a poorish farming country around here,"

said Phillip. "You'll notice a difference after awhile."

They had the smoking compartment to themselves and were lolling indolently upon the leather seats, their gazes fixed upon the panorama that swept undulatingly past the windows.

"Well, it doesn't look very enterprising hereabouts," John responded. "I think if they'd haul away a few of the rotting wagons and farming implements that decorate the landscape the place would have a more prosperous appearance."

It was new country to him and he had already seen much that interested and amused him. It was difficult to realize that Washington, with its Northern airs, was but thirty miles behind them. With the crossing of the ice-filmed Potomac they had apparently passed from the world of hurry and bustle and impatience into one of languor, softness and relaxation. It seemed that with every mile they dropped behind them a year went, too. The difference had been made apparent by little incidents. Soon after they had entered the train the conductor discovered Phillip's presence and had shaken hands, calling him Phil, and later taking his place beside him and relating news of things and persons

for quite half an hour. He was introduced to John as Major Fairburn. After he had left them to gallantly help a lady and a little girl from the train, John learned that he had served through the war and had won his title of major for heroism with Pickett's Division at Gettysburg.

"But, great Scott," exclaimed John, "isn't he capable of better stuff than conducting on a little old two-by-twice railroad like this?"

"I reckon not," replied Phillip. "I think he tried law for awhile down in Fredericksburg, but couldn't make it go. You see, John, after the war——"

"Oh, hang the war!" said the other savagely. "I suppose the brakeman is at least a colonel, isn't he? And the engineer's a—a lieutenant-general?"

"N-no," answered Phillip. "I don't know the brakeman; the Major says he's just been put on this run. But the engineer's a man named Warren, who used to go to the University. His folks lost their money and their land——"

"During the war!"

"During the war; and so he took to running an engine because he'd rather do that than starve, I

reckon. You see, John, we don't think less of folks here because they run engine or brake, just so long as they're gentlemen."

"But that isn't it," answered the other irritably. "The point's here: a fellow that had it in him to win promotion in your confounded war must have it in him to do something better than railroad work. Can't you see that?"

"Some of them farm," answered Phillip, "but, of course, the most of them drifted away to other places after the war was over. Some of our folks went West and stayed there. But—I reckon fellows like the Major and Warren didn't like leaving home; I know I shouldn't. I reckon I'd have stayed and done the best I could."

"Home be blowed! The chap that does stunts in the world is the chap that hasn't got any home. His home's where his toothbrush is. Your Major had no business thinking about home. He ought to have gone off and scratched gravel somewhere and made something of himself."

"Maybe," Phillip answered doubtfully. "But I reckon we care more about home than you folks in the North do."

"I guess you do. And if that's a sample over

there I can't say that I blame you. By Jove, Phil, that is sweet!"

A long turn in the road had brought into view a broad expanse of winter turf rising gently from a country road to a wooded promontory on which rested—there is no better word—a gleaming white residence formed of a central structure two stories high, from which on either side lesser buildings stretched away and were lost behind the trees. The sun shone warmly, brightly on the tall pillars and dignified front as though it loved them.

"Yes, that's Wancrewe's View," said Phillip. "We're getting into my country now," he added with a trace of proud proprietorship in his voice. "Things look different already, don't they?"

At the next station the platform was well filled with persons who had an unmistakable air of purpose and an equally unmistakable appearance of being dressed up. But there was a gravity in their faces that John wondered at until presently there came into view, from the direction of the baggage car, a fresh pine box that told the story. The Major was one of the bearers. He had discarded his blue cap, and his lean, tanned face wore an expression of sympathy that John could not think aught but

genuine. The box was borne, slowly, reverently, down the narrow platform to the baggage shed and there placed upon a truck. The throng outside was silent; the engine purred softly somewhere out of sight, and the only sound was the low directions of a little man in black who helped settle the box on the truck. Presently the Major passed under the window and entered the rear of the car. From a cupboard he brought forth a pasteboard box and, as he did so, his eye fell on Phillip. He paused at the door.

"It's Tom Culverson," he explained. "He died up in Pennsylvania Tuesday last. That's his sister, the little lady with the light hair."

"Oh," said Phillip. "He was a friend of my father, Major. I remember him. I'm sorry. Are those flowers?"

"Yes, just a few roses I got in Washington. I don't reckon there'll be many flowers, Phil."

He passed out with his box, and John, watching from the window, saw him present them to the "little lady with the light hair," a little lady with tired, tear-washed eyes who raised her handkerchief to her face as she accepted them and held the Major's hand a long while. John's last conscious glimpse as the

train moved slowly away was of "the little lady with the light hair." She held the Major's tribute in her hands while her eyes, with something in them almost approaching a smile, followed the train.

"I guess we're a bit late, aren't we?" he asked.

Phillip consulted his watch.

"A little, I reckon; about ten minutes. Why?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Maybe we'll make it up," said Phillip apologetically.

"Nonsense," answered John softly; "I'm glad of it."

The hills grew larger, softer in outline; the soil, where it was not hidden under bluegrass, looked darker and richer; the country had a more finished appearance hereabouts. Phillip pointed out the places of interest: here a stream that trickled through a wooded bottom where, just out of sight from the railroad, there was wonderful fishing to be had; yonder a hill where wild turkey had been killed no later than a year ago; in the distance a purple promontory of timbered hillside where deer were still extant—according to the stories told in the evenings in front of crackling logs; nearer at hand an old brick house, almost hemmed in by modern barn buildings,

a stock farm of wide repute. John looked, admired, questioned; and absent-mindedly filled a fresh pipe.

"It'll be a short one," warned Phillip, "for we'll be at Melville in about ten minutes. I hope Margey meets us."

"Is it likely?" asked John. The possibility of meeting Phil's sister so soon had not occurred to him. For some reason which he did not try to explain it made him rather breathless for a moment.

"Yes, Margey's fond of driving," answered his companion; "and if she can get away from the house she'll probably come for us herself and let Bob bring a wagon for the baggage." He began stuffing magazines and books into his bags and John followed his example. There was a long blast from the engine whistle, and the major, rising from his seat where for ten miles or so he had been in conversation with an elderly passenger, announced "Melville! Melville!" and gathered up the packages of a middle-aged lady, preparatory to helping her off the train. John was struggling into his coat when the train slowed down. Stooping, he looked out onto a straggling village street, crossed by a trickling stream, a weather-beaten platform and a station building sadly in need of a new coat of whitewash. The usual group of

idlers, white and coloured, were on hand. John picked up his luggage and followed Phillip from the car, bidding good-by to the Major ceremoniously, as to a host.

"I guess your sister didn't come," he said as he looked over the half-dozen vehicles in sight. But Phillip didn't hear him. He was shaking hands heartily with a young, very black and smiling negro.

"Bob, take Mr. North's bag round and then get Maid from the baggage car. Did Miss Margey come?"

"Yessir; she's waitin' roun' back. Cardinal don't like the cyars much, Mister Phil. You folks go ahead, sir; I'll fetch these yere bags. Has you got trunks?"

"Yes, here's my check. Give him yours, John, will you? You brought the wagon?"

"Yessir."

"All right, Bob; hurry them along. Come on, John."

They started around a corner of the station, but it was slow work, since Phillip was required to stop every step or two and shake hands. John was impressively introduced to the station agent, the foremost dry goods dealer, two farmers, and several

others whose names and occupations escaped him. His size, topping Phillip by almost a head as he did, visibly aroused the interest of his new acquaintances, and a good many eyes were fixed upon him as he followed Phillip around the corner.

By the rear platform stood a two-seated buck-board of light wood, in the shafts of which a large red bay tossed and turned his head restively. On the front seat, very erect, with whip and lines held firmly in gloved hands, sat a girl in brown covert coat and soft felt hat. Even as John caught his first glimpse of her she turned and saw them. A flush mounted into her cheeks as her glance passed Phillip to the tall, broad-shouldered stranger.

"Hello, Phil, dear!" she called, and carefully changing whip and reins to her left hand, she stretched the other one forth over the wheel. "Steady, Cardinal; be still! Don't you know your master, sir?"

"Howdy, sis?" Phillip took the hand and, leaning over, kissed her. "Margey, this is John North; my sister, John. Easy, Cardinal, you silly brute! Where's Bob? Oh, Bob, hold his head until we get in."

John took the gloved fingers in his own big palm

and received from them a firm, very manlike pressure. Two dark and serious eyes looked into his and a soft voice said:

"How do you do, Mr. North? It was very kind of you to come with Phil. Mamma will be awfully pleased. She feared toward the last that you would change your mind."

"The kindness is yours, Miss Ryerson. It's good of you and your mother to want to be bothered with a stranger, especially at Christmas time. I told Phil when he invited me to come that I feared you'd think me something of an interloper, but the temptation was too strong; and here I am. If I'm in the way, please pack me off home again." Margaret Ryerson smiled and made room for him beside her on the front seat.

"If you stay until your welcome wears out," she answered, "I fear your studies will suffer mightily. Mamma is quite ready to adopt you, Mr. North. Do you want to be adopted?"

"Nothing would please me more. I think, though, you'd better try me a few days beforehand; I wouldn't like to have you disappointed when it was too late."

"That's all right," cried Phillip. "I'll guarantee

him. Put the sticks in here, Bob, and the guns. All ready now. Let him go. Remember, Margey, you've got two precious young lives in your care; so careful at the corners!"

Cardinal had become highly impatient at the long wait, and while they threaded their way through the quaint, straggling little town he demanded all of Margaret's attention. Out on the hard country road, however, he ceased his tantrums and settled down to a long, even trot that was good to behold. Maid, excited by the homecoming and the release from long confinement, dashed hither and thither barking rapturously. Phillip leaned over the back of the front seat between his sister and John and hurled a veritable fusillade of questions at the former. Very soon John dropped out of the conversation altogether, save when his attention was called to something by the way, and he leaned back comfortably, glad to have his thoughts to himself for awhile. By turning his head slightly, as though in attention to what Phillip was saying, it was possible for him to study Margaret Ryerson without appearing to do so, and he made the most of the opportunity.

She was all that the photograph on Phillip's

mantel had led him to expect; all and the much more that is represented by the difference between cardboard and real flesh and blood. A writer may catalogue carefully every feature of a woman's face, every contour of her body, every colour and hue of hair and eyes and skin, and when he has finished, the mental picture held by the reader will no more resemble the woman seen by the writer than an outline drawing resembles an oil painting; and this because no writer has it in his power to describe what we call the expression of the face so that another can behold it. Expression is the outward reflection of the personality within; it is the soul looking forth from the body. Reynolds says: "In portraits, the grace, and, we may add, the likeness, consists more in the general air than in the exact similitude of every feature." Without expression there can be no portrait; only paint and canvas. Having set forth the impossibility of his task and having thoroughly discouraged himself at the outset, the writer now follows in the footsteps of all others of his kind, assured of failure.

Margaret Ryerson was a trifle over medium height and seemed slighter than was really the case, possibly because of a gracefulness that was apparent

even in the slightest turn of the head or lifting of the hand; a gracefulness possessed in a less marked degree by Phillip, and which, in her case as well as his, was largely due to a lifelong acquaintance with the saddle. Her resemblance to her brother did not end there: her features were his softened, feminized, and the contour of the face, although more rounded and delicate, recalled his. Her hair was deeply brown, but held warmer colour than Phillip's, while her eyes were at least a shade darker. They were serious eyes, and to-day, at least, shadowed as they were by the falling brim of her felt hat, impressed John as being somewhat inscrutable; nor could he later ever quite convince himself that this first impression was wrong.

For a Southerner Margaret's complexion was light, and her cheeks held more colour than is looked for in women born below Mason and Dixon's line. Beside her's, Phillip's face looked sallow. Her mouth was small and her lips were less full than her brother's. No face was ever yet formed quite perfect, and Margaret's held one fault at least: the chin was a trifle too prominent for absolute symmetry. And yet that very imperfection helped to form a whole that many persons thought beautiful.

John, at least, saw nothing that he would have had altered. He thought her lovely, and experienced an odd and delightful sort of pride in her, as though she were a discovery or creation of his own.

He had hoped for a good deal, as he could see now when he found opportunity to compare his preconceived ideas with the reality, and was not disappointed; on the contrary, the real Margaret Ryerson far excelled the ideal. The impression he received of her that afternoon while spinning over the undulating country road between far-stretching fields and wooded hilltops, and one which he retained ever afterward, was a very wholesome one. Her general expression was serious, though far from somber, and her smiles, frequent as they were, were little ones in which the deep brown eyes seemed more concerned than the lips. John found that she did not laugh often; and when she did it was like a brook that ripples all the merrier for being confined for a space. Yet, while her face expressed gravity, it told no tale of unhappiness or dissatisfaction; rather quiet contentment, a thankful joy of existence that found expression in graciousness and kindness rather than in exuberance of talk and laughter. Here, John told himself, was a woman

whose love could not be easily gained, and was therefore better worth the winning. And he meant to win it. He had meant to ever since he had received her letter, and now his resolution was strengthened and intensified. He spoke for the first time in many minutes:

"It's beautiful here," he said. Margaret turned to him and smiled. Her eyes were questioning.

"You like it?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied simply. He turned to Phillip. "You didn't tell me it was like this, Phil; you never did it half justice."

Phillip's gaze moved over the scene. The sunlight was full and strong and bathed everything in an amber glow. There was autumn in the air and spring in the earth; nowhere, despite that here and there a pond was covered thinly with ice, was winter more than a suggestion. The sky was intensely blue; the distant hills were mauve; the nearer ones deeply brown with timber or freshly saffron with turf in which summer seemed only hiding for the moment. Phillip smiled softly, happily.

"I couldn't," he answered almost below his breath.

They had left the village some three miles to the

east and were now topping a hill, Cardinal taking it with long, effortless strides and Tudor Maid trotting along at the edge of the road with happy eye and lolling tongue. As they began the short descent a new vista opened out before them. Half a dozen clusters of buildings were in sight, dotted over several miles of tilled field and meadow. Pillars of wood smoke rose purple and slender and straight into the golden atmosphere. To the right at the foot of the hill the road turned toward a ribbon of brush and timber that hid the slow meandering of a creek whose course the eye could trace for fully two miles; to the left it ran straight and ascensive toward a thickly wooded ridge which stretched, like a miniature mountain range, north and south—a “hog-back,” decisively dividing the present tableland from the valley beyond. Where the road parted a branch of the creek had formed a little pond, about the margins of which a group of laughing, shouting children were vainly striving to find an ice-crust that would bear their weight. As the carriage passed they paused to watch and utter shrill greetings. One diminutive youngster held up in triumph a pair of shining skates for their awed inspection. Margaret returned their greetings. The occupant

of the back seat was recognized, and they passed on to a chorus of "Howdy, Mister Phil!"

John now saw that where the present road parted a second one began and led away in broad curves behind rows of leafless trees toward the ridge, and that somewhere in that direction spirals of smoke were ascending and specks of white were now and then discernible through the timber. Directly ahead of them huge iron gates between stone pillars were almost hidden by a cluster of massive oaks. Cardinal stopped with his muzzle against the rusted grilling and Phillip leaped to the ground and, officiously aided by Maid, threw open the creaking gates. Cardinal sidled through, the iron portals clanged back into place, Phillip sprang up, and they sped onward around a long curve of well-kept roadway between the gray and brown trunks of oaks and chestnuts. Margaret turned to John and smiled:

"Welcome to Elaine," she said.

CHAPTER XIV

PRESENTLY they passed through a second gate and left the outpost of trees behind. To the right stretched a broad expanse of turf, bare of trees or shrubs; Phillip called it the lawn. It led upward to a sloping terrace upon which, fair and white against a dense background of winter woods, guarded by a few sentinel trees which threw their leafless shadows upon the sunlit walls, stood the house, crowning the splendour of the landscape with its own gleaming beauty and quiet dignity. John drew a breath of intense pleasure as he looked, while Cardinal, moved to new impatience by the sight of the stables, rushed around the curve that, bordering the lawn, led to the house.

Elaine had been built by Phillip's great-grandfather in the early part of the century, when three or four years was thought none to long for the rearing of a home. The great terrace had been pulled down from the ridge at the back and thrown up from the sloping meadow below by scores of toiling

slaves; the stone that formed the thick walls had been carted from quarries forty miles away as the crow flies; the timber had been felled upon the estate, sawn and cut and planed with infinite toil; the huge stone columns before the door had been erected by workmen brought from Italy for the purpose. That long-gone Phillip Ryerson had builded well, and to-day the house was as strong and undisturbed as when he had first led his young bride into it. Save that here and there the plaster covering the stones had cracked or chipped, the building showed no signs of any depredations of time or weather; nor had the civil strife which had waged hotly about it marred its beauty; though once, indeed, the great hall had been piled high with bundles of fodder and only a miracle had averted the applying of the torch by Northern soldiers.

The house was long—"Four feet longer than the White House at Washington," Phillip assured—and two stories and a half in height. In the centre of the front an immense portico stood forth, its roofs supported by four great Greek Doric columns whose bases two men could scarce encircle with their arms. The masonry of the columns was hidden by plaster,

white and gleaming like the pediment above; and the same snowy hue was everywhere visible save upon the doors and windows and upon the ornamental lintels above them. These were of two shades of chocolate brown, and, with the hanging balcony above the front entrance, lent a pleasant suggestion of the Italian to the architecture. The white chimneys rising above the gables were topped with mellow ochre-tinted pots. Just now the shadows were gathering beneath the portico roof, but upon the rest of the house front the westerning sun shone warmly, delicately shadowing the walls with the tracery of spreading branches and throwing upon the great base of a column a grotesque silhouette of one of the two big lions which, standing at either side upon their stone acroteria, guarded the broad entrance.

As the carriage reached the corner of the house three dogs, a red-and-white setter, a dark brindle bull terrier and a toddling beagle, raced toward them, baying and yelping their welcome, while a flock of handsome bronze turkeys and two disdainful peacocks hurried across the drive toward the shelter of the trees. On the porch stood a white-

haired darky, and below, on the gravel, a younger one ready to take the horse.

"Hello, Uncle!" called Phillip. The elder darky grinned delightedly and bobbed his grizzled head.

"Howdy, Will!" The younger smiled from ear to ear and performed a subdued double-shuffle in the roadway. Phillip leaped to the porch, shook hands with the butler and turned to John.

"All out for Elaine!" he cried merrily. "Here's where we stop, John. Look after those guns and umbrellas, Uncle. Out you come, sis!"

In the hall, broad, deep and high of ceiling, a room in itself, Margaret, drawing her gloves from palms that ached with holding the headstrong Cardinal; nodded smilingly toward a deep chair. John shook his head, however, and turning to one of the windows gazed out over the sloping, sun-bathed lawn to the timbered creek, to the fields beyond, to the purple rises and hills beyond those, and so to an almost cloudless horizon which already hinted of sunset. He received an impression of openness and space that was almost thrilling. Phillip, followed by the butler, came in with the luggage, and to the darky Margaret spoke:

"Has mother come down?"

"No'm, not yet. She said she'd wait till you-all come."

"Very well. You'd better take Mr. North's things to his room, Uncle; and perhaps you'd like to go up?" turning to John.

"Thank you, I will."

"I'm going up to see mamma; I'll be back in a minute or so, John. I've told them at the stable to bring the horses around; we'll take a ride before supper." Phillip tossed aside his cap and turned toward a door.

"But maybe Mr. North is tired, Phil, and would rather not ride this evening," said Margaret.

"Tired! Shucks, Margey; why, you just can't tire him! You want to ride, don't you, John?"

"I should like to very much. It seems a mistake to stay indoors in this kind of weather—it's grand. I'll get washed up a bit and change my things. Don't let your mother put herself to any inconvenience on my account, Phil, unless she would have come downstairs anyway—if I wasn't here, I mean——"

"This is her usual time," answered Margaret. "I suspect the reason she's not already here to welcome you is that she's doing an unusual amount

of primping on your account, Mr. North. Mamma is not beyond feminine coqueties, is she, Phil?"

"She's the biggest flirt in four counties!" laughed Phillip. "I don't doubt but that she's been dressing for your conquest, John, ever since morning."

"The extra exertion is quite unnecessary," John replied gravely. "I came here quite prepared to fall victim to her charms."

Uncle Casper, with John in tow, led the way through an old-style drawing-room at the right to a narrow entry from which stairs led upward to a similar hall on the second floor. John's room was to the left, an immense apartment occupying the corner of the house toward the stables. On the front two large windows afforded the same broad view of the lawn and the country villageward that he had admired from the hall. On the side two other windows overlooked a space of turf that narrowed itself between two driveways until its apex lay just outside the gate of the stable-yard. To the right of it was the terrace and the lawn, to the left the thickly wooded ridge, rising abruptly from the back of the house and inviting to explorations with gun and dog. The stables were painted white, with brown roofs, and from the centre of

what was evidently the original structure arose against the clear sky an airy clock tower surmounted by a great iron vane. Beyond the stables the ground dipped to a hollow through which a small stream slipped down from the hill beyond; and across the hollow, disputing the edge of the rise with the primeval forest, lay a group of barns, folds, pens and sheds. On that side a door opened upon a balcony from which a flight of steps gave access to the ground. "Must have been designed for a bachelor apartment," John thought. The room was well, if plainly furnished, and an antique testerbed, draped about with faded pink curtains, promised good repose. Near the bed a big fireplace was ablaze with pine logs that hurled their sparks against the brass fender with reports like miniature pistols. The warmth felt agreeable, since the four windows were wide open; and after Uncle Casper had taken his slow departure, John lighted a cigarette and, turning his broad back to the glow, clasped his hands behind him and gazed contentedly across the width of the room and out into the afternoon world. He had been several times abroad, although his travels there had followed well-worn roads, and he had looked about not a

little in his own country, and now he was telling himself that never had he found a place as beautiful as Elaine nor one better worth calling home.

Presently he threw aside his cigarette and struggled into a pair of riding breeches—discovering to his dismay that he had put on flesh since the summer—and worked his feet into a pair of boots. When he was dressed he glanced at his watch and found the time to be a quarter to four. From the stable the negro, Will, was bringing the horses, a big black stallion and a smaller but rangy-looking bay mare which John guessed to be a sister to Cardinal. He watched them pass toward the portico and made his way downstairs. Phillip was in the hall looking very handsome in whipcords, boots and brown tweed coat.

“Mamma asks me to apologize to you, old man, for not coming down. I think the excitement of seeing me again has rather upset her. I was to convey her compliments and say that she bids you welcome to Elaine and hopes to have the pleasure of seeing you at supper. There! Those are her own words, and I think I said them nicely. Are you all ready? We won’t have much time, but we can jog around a bit.”

"I hope Mrs. Ryerson is not ill?" asked John with concern.

"No; only a little headache, I reckon. Margey made her lie down until supper." A look of anxiety shaded his face for a moment. "I suppose it's my being away so long, but she looks heaps thinner and poorer than I thought. Poor little mamma! She's been getting more and more like a dear little ghost ever since father died. I'm beginning to think that maybe I'd ought to stay at home with her, John, instead of going away off there to college. But she won't hear of it; it was father's wish, she says. I reckon if he had wanted me to go to South Africa and dig gold she'd have insisted on my going. Well, come on. How's Ruby, Will? All right? She looks fine. That's my mare, John. Isn't she a sweet one? You can have either of them. The stallion's rather mean going through the gates, but except for that he's a pretty steady horse. And the mare's as nice as you'll want."

"I guess I'll take the mare, if you don't mind," answered John. "I haven't ridden since summer, and not a great deal then, and I guess she'll break me in easier."

"All right, then I'll ride Winchester. Will, look

at Mr. North's stirrups; you'll have to let them out a good deal, I reckon. When Bob gets here tell him the trunk with the red stripes goes to Mr. North's room. All right, John? We'll ride over to the East Farm and call on Markham. He's the overseer, you know, and a mighty nice fellow."

But they didn't have to go to the East Farm to see Markham, for they met him half a mile from the house; a tall, angular man of about forty years, with a long and drooping yellow mustache and a soft and deliberate Southern drawl that John liked to listen to. He rode a horse that was as near a counterpart of himself as a horse could be—a yellowish sorrel with many angles and a deliberate gait. The meeting between Phillip and Markham was more in the nature of that between brothers than between employer and employed. Phillip introduced the others and they shook hands cordially above their stirrups.

"This is Tom Markham, John," said Phillip; "a good fellow, and the finest overseer in the State of Virginia."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," Markham greeted. "Allow me to add my welcome to the others. It's always a pleasure to me to meet a No'therner; I

fought against 'em, sir, and the more I fought 'em the more I liked 'em, sir. Yes, Mr. No'th, by doggie, sir!" He drew forth a plug of tobacco and offered it with a courteous inclination of the cone-crowned sombrero that covered his weather-stained face. John declined with equal politeness, and Markham set two rows of strong white teeth into the plug. "A pow'ful mean habit, sir. I respect yo' decision, sir; by doggie, sir!" He spat politely and drew a lean brown hand over his mustache. "Where yo' goin', Phil?"

"We started out to call on you. Where are you going?"

"I was on my way to see you and pay my respects to yo' friend."

"Well, can't you come back to supper with us?"

"Thank you, not to-night. I shall be pleased to come over to-morrow night."

"That's fine," answered Phillip. "I want to have a good talk with you."

"If yo'-all have no special place in mind," said Markham, "why not ride over to Cupples's with me? I want to see about some hay they've got for sale. We're not goin' to have enough to last, I reckon, and I want to buy before the

price goes up. They're askin' nine and a half in Melville now."

"All right," Phillip replied; "one place is as good as another to us. I reckon we can get back by supper time if we cut through the woods."

John let the others ride ahead, since the narrow road would not allow of three abreast, and trotted along behind on Ruby, filling his lungs with the moist, frosty air of evening and watching the darkening panorama of hill and field and woodland. The leather felt good between his thighs, the road was firm and springy, and Ruby was a horse in a hundred, having a long, easy trot that carried her along with seemingly no effort. They went through innumerable gates which Markham either opened from the saddle or dismounted and let down, and Winchester fidgeted and reared at each succeeding one as though he had never seen its like. When they reached the little hill farm that was their destination the lights were aglow in the house and the haystack was scarcely more than a blur of black in the purple-gray twilight. But Markham pulled out tufts here and there and nibbled it knowingly, and Phillip followed suit, while John kept his seat and held the restive Winchester. Maid and the

beagle, whose name was Tubby, had accompanied them, and were now growlingly renewing acquaintances with the resident dogs. Markham threw the reins back over his horse's head and climbed into the saddle.

"Good hay, Phil, that," he said. "A bit dusty, maybe, but all right if the price suits. How much do you reckon there is there?"

"It's hard to see," answered Phillip, "but I should say about eight tons."

"Gingeration! I'll buy it for eight," chuckled Markham, "yes, sir! I reckon there's nearer ten. It's mighty well settled. I'll ride down to the house and see 'em; it won't take but a minute."

Presently he returned, loping up the little rise toward them.

"That's fixed, Phil. Got it for nine tons. They wanted eight and a half for it, but I got it for eight and a quarter. Good hay, too, by doggie, sir, yes!"

"Tom, can't you get us up a fox hunt some day soon?" asked Phillip on the way back. "This is good weather, you know."

"Certainly I can. Old Colonel Brownell and a lot of the boys rode over here last Saturday and borrowed the dogs and found just back of Clear-

spring. They had a good run and caught a young vixen right down over yonder"—pointing into the darkness toward the west—"and the Colonel carried off the head. The Colonel's sixty-eight," he continued, turning toward John, "and he's never missed a hunt yet. Well, now, how would next Monday morning do?"

"All right, I reckon," answered Phillip. "And we'll pray for as good weather as this."

"You're right; this is certainly mighty fine weather. Well, I'll leave yo'-all here and jog home, I reckon. Good-night, Phil. Good-night, Mr. No'th; mighty pleased to have made yo' acquaintance, sir, an' hope to see yo' over at my place before yo' leave, sir."

Half-way home, while riding through a clearing that was bordered on one side by a dark wood, there was a sudden noise in the underbrush, followed by the sweet, clear, bell-like note of the beagle and the sharp, excited yelping of Tudor Maid. John's mount threw up her head, laid her ears back and tugged at the bit.

"Tubby's found a fox," cried Phillip. "Whoa, boy!" He stood up in his stirrups and placed a hand at his mouth.

"Ha-arkaway!" he called shrilly. "Harkaway! After him, Tubby, old boy!"

The rustling of the underbrush died away and Tubby's voice from a distance took on a worried, whining tone.

"He's lost him," laughed Phillip. "Come on, Winchester." They rode on in a silence disturbed only by the tread of the horses on the soft wagon path, the musical creaking of leather and the occasional rustling or chirp of birds preparing for the night. When they reached the top of the hill Elaine lay before and below them, a misty white blur picked out with tiny lights, while in the east, over a dark rampart of forests, the moon was sailing, its lower edge caught in the topmost branches of a distant tree.

"By Jove," said John softly, "but that's beautiful!"

"Yes," answered Phillip, as their horses, scenting the stables, tugged at the reins and began the descent; and after a moment he added thoughtfully, "I wonder if Margey told Aunt Cicely to have cakes for supper."

It is probable that she did, for when, an hour later, they sat at table, Uncle Casper began a series

of excursions to the kitchen which John thought would never end, returning each time laden with steaming, golden-brown griddle-cakes and offering them to the guest with a murmured and persuasive "Hot cakes, sir?" that John found difficult to resist. Between Uncle Casper and Phillip—continually challenging John to renewed excesses—and Mrs. Ryerson, who apparently believed that he was about to die of starvation under her eyes, he was in danger of doing mortal injury to his digestion. The only thing that saved him was the fact that as soon as he had prepared his cakes and had taken his first mouthful or two, Uncle Casper would appear at his elbow with a fresh plate.

"Mr. North, do take some more and butter them while they're hot," Mrs. Ryerson would beg; and in that moment of hesitation which is fatal Uncle Casper would whisk away his plate and present a new one, and John would begin all over again. But his ride—to Crupples's and back was reckoned six miles—had given him a keen appetite, and he thoroughly enjoyed his supper and would have been enabled to rival Phillip in the consumption of cakes had that dish not been preceded by a bountiful

repast of country sausage, baked potatoes, salad and divers kinds of hot bread.

The dining-room was large and high-ceilinged, but furnished in such a way that the effect was one of coziness rather than spaciousness. The table was small and oval and was lighted only by the two old-fashioned candelabra. Phillip sat at the head and his mother at the foot, Margaret and John facing each other on the sides—an arrangement that the latter heartily approved of.

Mrs. Ryerson was a sweet-faced, delicate-looking little woman of about forty, who took her troubles seriously but without undue complaining. Her hair was heavily streaked with white and suffering had left its imprint about the rather deep eyes and delicate mouth. But for all that John could readily understand how, not so many years ago, she was called the handsomest woman in the county. Both Phillip and Margaret had something of her looks, but were cast in larger mould. She had a rather ceremonious manner of speech that suggested hoop-skirts and patches, and caused John to raise his eyes involuntarily to the old portraits on the walls. But her welcome had been unmistakably sincere and hearty, despite its formality, and had made John

wonder whether he was not something of an impostor, since he was looked upon at Elaine as one whose example and guidance had saved Phillip from awful and unknown pitfalls. John believed that as a guardian he had been somewhat of a failure, and he had striven to convey the fact to Mrs. Ryerson. But he might as well have saved his breath, for that admiring lady had already set him up in her mind as a hero and received his attempts to disclaim credit with polite incredulity.

After supper Phillip lead John to the library for a smoke. It was a small room, shabby in appearance, lined from floor to ceiling with shelves containing a collection of literature typical of fifty years ago: the *Spectator* in small calf-bound and discoloured volumes, Pepys and Evelyn, several mythologies, Richardson and Sterne, countless cloth-backed volumes of the British poets, the Waverley Novels in ponderous forms, and hundreds of other books of whose existence the world has long since forgotten. Later the two returned to the drawing-room, where before a big oak fire Mrs. Ryerson and Margaret were awaiting them. It was a quiet evening and a pleasant one. The two women were full of questions regarding Phillip's college life which his letters had

failed to answer, and so he explained a great deal, constantly turning to John for corroboration.

The latter listened, answered when appealed to, threw in a word of his own now and then, watched the flames and sometimes Margaret, and was delightfully restful and contented. He was a trifle saddle-sore and somewhat sleepy. At nine Mrs. Ryerson retired, and after a few minutes more of almost silent contemplation of the fire the others followed suit.

"I'm jolly sleepy," said Phillip. "Besides, we're to shoot in the morning. Aunt Cicely is to give us breakfast at seven."

John lay in the big four-poster watching the fire-light dance on the white walls and thinking over the incidents of the day for quite ten minutes. Then with the distant baying of a foxhound in his ears he turned over and began to snore.

CHAPTER XV

JOHN awoke, threw his bare arms over his head, stretching them until the muscles stood out like ropes, and opened his eyes. The room was in darkness save for a dim yellow glow that shone over the high footboard. He wondered sleepily and closed his eyes. When he opened them again the yellow glow hurt them; it came from beside the bed and slowly evolved into a dimly burning lantern. By it Uncle Casper was kneeling, striking matches on the hearth. John wondered what time of night it was and hurled himself over onto his face.

After awhile he awoke again. The windows were cold squares of gray light. In the chimney a fire crackled merrily, throwing leaping shadows about the dim room. By the washstand a tin bucket of hot water sent up curling filaments of steam. John yawned loudly. The door opened and Uncle Casper tiptoed in once more, bearing John's shoes and trousers, the former shining like patent leather in the firelight, the latter newly

brushed and folded. Disposing of these, the darky knelt by the hearth, not without many rheumatic protestations, and replenished the fire. John yawned again.

"Good-morning, Uncle," he said.

"Mawnin', sir, mawnin'. I trusts yo' slep' well, sir?"

"Like a top!" answered John. "What time is it?"

"Quarter of seven, sir. Mister Phil's up an' sends his comp'ments an' says breakfas' will be ready right away, sir."

They had breakfast by lamplight, but the big curtains were drawn back from the high windows and across the valley the morning light swept the shadows into the west. Outside on the gravel a dignified procession of fowls exchanged compliments and observations on the weather and scratched and pecked diligently. The dogs watched the front door anxiously, while Will, the stable boy, sat on the edge of the porch and sung snatches of low-voiced melody and flipped pebbles at the indignant peacocks.

The sun was up, a ball of fire above the eastern hills, when they left the house. The lawn sparkled with frost and there was a pleasant nip in the air.

Tudor Maid and the red-and-white setter, Grover, frisked ahead excitedly until they had descended the terrace and were crushing the hoar frost from the turf. Will followed bearing ammunition and lunch. John and Phillip parted company and, with fifty yards of glittering lawn between them, strode briskly toward the lane that skirted the lower edge of the inclosure. Beyond the lane a field of winter wheat began, but along the rail fence the bushes grew undisturbed, and Grover, stealthily creeping toward it, suddenly came to a stand. John, his heart leaping suddenly into his throat, looked to his gun and sent the dog on. Then, with a disconcerting whirr and rush of beating wings, a small covey shot up from the tangle and flew across to the left. John emptied both barrels and a feather or two fluttered lazily downward. Phillip, kneeling, raised his gun. *Bang!* A partridge quivered in air, thrashed, and then came rushing to earth, turning over and over. Phillip used his left barrel, but missed, for the rest of the covey had swung toward the east. Will picked up the dead bird and dropped it grinning into the bag. John called across the field.

“Were those partridges, Phil?”

"Yes."

"Thought it was an explosion of dynamite."

"Better luck next time," laughed Phillip.

They followed the fence without further result and crossed into a meadow that led with easy slopes to the creek bottom. Half-way down Maid flushed a covey of five birds and Phillip brought down his second bird, while John, his nerves steadier, got a fine shot at a plump cock and exultantly watched it drop. The sun was well over the hilltops now and the fields and knolls were aglow with wan, yellow light. They skirted the creek toward the East Farm, a mile distant, where several coveys were known to have taken up winter quarters.

Back at the house Uncle Casper was sweeping the broad, marble-laid porch, keeping time to the swing of the broom with a quavering song. Uncle Casper's vocal efforts were reserved for such times as he was certain of being unheard. He had strict ideas of propriety and considered singing beneath the dignity of his office. That is why, when he heard a swishing of skirts at the door, he ceased abruptly in the middle of a bar and muttered objurgations over a wisp of thread which, caught in a splinter of the lintel, obstinately refused to yield to the broom.

"Good-morning, Uncle."

He turned with well-simulated surprise.

"Good-mawnin', Miss Margey."

"You seem very happy this morning, Uncle."

"Ma'am?"

"Didn't I hear you singing a moment ago?"

"Singin'? Me singin'?" He looked so distressed that Margaret regretted her suspicion. "No'm; yo' didn't hear *me* singin'; no'm, I don' sing. Mus' have been some of them lazy, triflin' niggers at ther stable, Miss Margey. I got somethin' better to do than be a-singin'."

"Have the gentlemen been gone long?"

"'Bout a half-hour, miss. I reckon they down by ther creek now; I heard they guns a-poppin' bit ago."

"Mamma's tray is ready and you can take it up now. Are the lamps ready?"

"Yes'm; they's on ther table." He gave a final flourish of the broom, looked scathingly at the obdurate thread and moved toward the door. Margaret, who had been looking out across the sunlit lawn with smiling eyes, turned to him.

"Uncle, has Mister Phil said anything to you——"

She paused at a loss. "I mean do you think he has

noticed anything different from—from what he was used to?”

Uncle Casper rubbed his chin reflectively and brought his grizzled eyebrows together.

“No’m; least he ain’t said nothin’ to me. Don’ see how he could notice anythin’ diff’reent, Miss Margey. You ’n’ me’s been mighty ca’ful, ain’t we?”

“Yes, I reckon we have, Uncle; but—but—— Oh, I do hope he won’t find out that we’re—not so rich as we were!”

“No’m; ain’t no use in his worryin’ ’bout it, is they? Reckon they’s a heap o’ things fo’ him ter worry ’bout anyhow; reckon bein’ edicated’s mighty tryin’ sort o’ process—’rithmatic—Latin—French—grammar—depo’tment—all they lessons mus’ be pow’ful wearin’ on him. But don’ yo’ trouble, Miss Margey, we’ll git on all right. Hens is layin’ right nice, Cicely ’lows, an’——” He paused to laugh softly and shake his head. “Reckon, though, if that they Mister No’t’h stays very long they hens’ll git discouraged; he done eat fo’ aigs fo’ his breakfas’ this mawnin’!”

“If we get short of them, Uncle, maybe they’ll let us have some at the East Farm,” said Margaret, smiling.

"Yes'm. Don' yo' be a-troublin', Miss Margey; I gwine say a word to they hens; I gwine tell 'em 'bout this yer Mister No'th bein' mighty fond o' aigs. They's pow'ful reason'ble hens, Miss Margey!"

Margaret entered the house, followed by Uncle Casper, and passed through the dining-room, where Aunt Cicely, a tall mulatto, was clearing the breakfast table, and out onto a small back porch. This was separated from the hill that rose sharply behind the house only by a narrow graveled driveway. The shadow of the building rested half-way to the summit of the wooded slope, but beyond its edge the trees and undergrowth were aglow with mellow sunlight. It was chilly out there, and Margaret, after tying a long apron about her, threw a little white shawl over her shoulders.

Filling the lamps was a duty that Margaret performed herself. On a long table stood oil-can, shears, cloths and an army of lamps, big and little, from the porcelain-globed monster that stood in the drawing-room down to the tiny hand lamps used by the servants. Margaret maintained that filling and trimming lamps was a science beyond the comprehension of Aunt Cicely or Uncle Casper or Daphne, Mrs. Ryerson's maid, and each morning went at the

task with an amount of reverential concentration befitting the performance of a sacred rite. At Elaine lamps never smoked nor went out in the middle of the evening.

But this morning the concentration was not as perfect as usual. Margaret's thoughts wandered afield—in fact, to a field to the eastward in which two men with guns were rapidly filling the game-bag that swung over the shoulder of a grinning negro. Now and then, ever fainter and fainter, the sound of the guns reached the girl on the back porch, and would have drawn her thoughts eastward had they not already been speeding that way. Sometimes the thoughts seemed pleasant ones, sometimes a little cloud of perplexity filmed the smile in her eyes. Once she sighed softly, and once she turned with chimney and cloth in hand and gazed wide-eyed at the sunlighted summit of the slope for a full minute ere she turned back to her work.

When the last lamp had been filled, the last wick trimmed, the last chimney polished until it shone, and when she had washed and dried her hands and doffed apron and shawl, she entered the house again and ascended to her mother's bedroom. Mrs. Ryerson was seated at the window, a slim, frail

figure in a dove-gray dressing-gown on which the sunlight threw queer floating shadows of branch and twig. A fire smouldered in the chimney-place and a tray on a low table bore the remains of a scanty breakfast. Daphne was tidying up the room, her leisurely journeying to and fro taking her again and again in front of the west window from which it was possible to catch a glimpse of the house garden and a young negro engaged in repairing a fence. Daphne was young and pretty from the viewpoint of the carpenter outside, and room-cleaning and fence-building went slowly.

"They're not back yet?" asked Mrs. Ryerson in her soft, delicate voice.

"Not yet, mamma," Margaret answered. "But it's only half-past nine, you know. I reckon they'll not come for a long while yet. They must have found plenty of birds; I heard their guns again and again."

"Yes, I did, too. Well, I hope Phil will be able to keep Mr. North entertained, dear. I should so dislike having him return to his home thinking us shabby and commonplace." Mrs. Ryerson sighed, folded her white hands in her lap and looked silently out of the window. Margaret found some sewing

and drew a small chair into the broad shaft of sunlight.

"He has wonderful eyes, dear."

Margaret looked from threading her needle and laughed softly.

"Oh, mamma, you've 'done gone' and fell in love again! And with a Northerner, too!" Mrs. Ryerson smiled and shook her head.

"I hope I shall never grow so old that I shall be indifferent to a man's looks, Margey," she answered. After a moment she added: "Your father was the handsomest man I ever saw."

"Phillip is like him, isn't he?"

"Yes, greatly like, dear. And more like than ever since he came back. There's a difference, dear. You've observed it?"

"Yes; he seems—well, more quiet. It's as though he'd rubbed some of his corners off, too. He's taller, I reckon, and straighter, and—and older."

"Yes, older," echoed Mrs. Ryerson. "And more like Phillip—your father, I mean. I think college has done him good already. But—I don't want him to change much more, Margey." She dropped into silence again. Then, "You haven't told him—anything yet?" she asked.

"Oh, no," answered Margaret, shaking her brown head above the garment in her lap. "What's the use, mamma? It would only trouble him. I don't think he has noticed any difference. Perhaps—later—when he comes home for the summer——"

"Yes, he will have to know then. I fear he will feel badly about losing the place, Margey."

"Yes." Margaret looked through the window across the morning landscape. "Yes," she repeated, "I know he will. But——" She didn't finish the sentence, but went back to her work with a little sigh. Daphne bore the tray away and for several minutes the room was still. Then Mrs. Ryerson withdrew her gaze from the outside world and glanced across at her daughter and smiled as though at her thoughts.

"Don't you think that he is very good looking, Margey?"

"Phil?"

"No, dear, Mr. North."

"M—yes," answered Margaret, in the tone of one considering a question for the first time.

"And you like him, don't you?"

"I reckon I do," was the reply. "Anyhow, I don't dislike him. Of course, Phil thinks he's very

wonderful, and I reckon that's enough, don't you? We needn't all fall down and worship, need we?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Ryerson, mildly, aggrievedly, "I certainly said nothing about worshiping him. I do think he's an extremely handsome young man, with grand eyes, and a perfect gentleman if ever there was one; quite like a Virginian. And he has been very kind to Phil, dear, and—and——"

"Of course he has," Margaret hastened to say, "and I'll promise to love him dearly, mamma. Only——" she bent and bit off a thread—"I do wish he hadn't quite such an assured way of talking and doing things—just as though he couldn't do anything out of the way or say anything that wasn't just right."

"But——"

"I know, mamma, that's what makes it much worse; he never does."

CHAPTER XVI

"I SAY, Margey, Will tells me you've sold the russet harness. I reckon he's lying, but I couldn't see it anywhere in the stable."

Phillip paused in his work of carving a second slice of lamb for John—the morning's gunning had been more productive of hunger than partridges, although six brace of birds had rewarded them—and looked anxiously at Margaret.

"Will is right, Phil," she answered evenly. "You know, dear, we're not quite so well off as we were before father died and it seemed best to get rid of some of the extra things. We didn't really need the russet harness. Judge Pottinger took that and two heavy work harnesses."

"But—but——!" Phillip stared in surprise. "We are surely not so poor that we have to sell things like that to the neighbours, Margey! Great Scott, what do they think of us? And, besides, the russet harness was the best of the lot, and a heap sweller than the black leather. Don't you think so, John?"

"Russet's rather out of style, isn't it?" asked the other.

"Well, I like it better, anyhow," asserted Phillip, completing his carving with a vicious hack of the knife. "And—what else is gone, Margey? I'd like to know so that when I see the neighbours using our things I won't charge them with stealing them."

Margaret's cheeks flushed a little, but she answered as calmly as before:

"I reckon that's about all, Phil. I'm sorry you care so much; I didn't think you would."

Phillip made no reply, and a moment later the conversation at the dinner table started afresh on other lines. But constraint was visible. Margaret felt hurt that Phillip should have found fault with her before John North; Phillip was plainly out of temper, although he strove not to show it; and John was secretly angry at his friend for wounding Margaret. Of the four, only Mrs. Ryerson maintained her equanimity. She chatted on to John in her quiet, grande-dame fashion of life and customs before the war, and John answered perfunctorily and wished the repast over with.

When they arose Phillip excused himself and John wandered into the library and filled a pipe.

Mrs. Ryerson, as was her invariable custom, ascended to her room again on the arm of Uncle Casper, and Margaret disappeared toward the kitchen. John took down a book at random and settled himself in an easy chair to read. But it proved to be an ancient volume of Hudibras, and it soon lay forgotten on his knee. From where he sat he commanded a view of some fifty yards of gravel drive and terrace. Presently into his range of vision came two figures. They were Phillip and Margaret. Phillip, with head slightly bent and a good deal of colour in his cheeks, was evidently still nursing his displeasure. Margaret walked beside him, one hand on his shoulder, looking gravely into his face. As they passed outside the library window her voice, low, sweet and persuasive, reached the watcher in the chair and suddenly imbued him with a great longing to take Phillip by the neck and dip his head into the brook beyond in the hollow.

Then something incongruous in the girl's attire awakened his attention, and with a strange throb at his heart he saw that she wore a man's felt hat; that the hat, a battered, soiled and altogether disreputable affair, was adorned with cabalistic designs and figures; that it bore the initials J. N.,

and that, in short, it was his own! Presumably, Margaret believed it to be one of her brother's; or perhaps she had simply picked it up from the hall table in a hurry without looking at it. John could not for an instant deceive himself into believing that there was any coquetry in the incident. But even viewed purely as an accident, the fact that Margaret wore his shabby sombrero perched at the back of her head pleased him vastly. The hat had already been one of his most precious possessions, but now it was sacred—no longer an article of head-gear, but an object to be treasured and kept inviolate. John wondered if it were possible to frame hats.

Phillip and Margaret had passed from sight, and he relighted his pipe and, clasping one broad knee with his hands, leaned back and watched the purple smoke-clouds writhe and dance in the sunlight. Their convolutions must have amused him, for he grinned broadly from time to time like a good-natured and thoroughly prepossessing giant.

A quarter of an hour passed. Then the sound of footsteps on the gravel aroused him and he looked out. Phillip and Margaret were returning. But now Phillip's arm was about his sister's waist and the two were laughing contentedly. Margaret's

eyes under the broad brim of the hat, which she had pulled forward to keep the sun from her face, were dancing and glowing. Phillip caught sight of John and beckoned him outside. The latter nodded and knocked the ashes from his pipe. Then he sighed.

"It's sheer poppycock to imagine that a girl like that can ever care for me," he thought ruefully. He picked up the volume which had fallen unnoticed to the floor and carried it back to the shelf. As he did so a line caught his eye and he paused and read it:

"He that is valiant, and dares fight,
Though drubb'd, can lose no honour by't."

"By jove," he muttered, "Butler had some sense, after all!"

Phillip and his sister were awaiting him before the porch.

"Put your hat on and come along," Phillip commanded. "We've going over to the stable."

"All right, but I don't need a hat," John answered evasively as he joined them.

"Oh, but I really think you'd better put one on," Margaret said. "It's so easy to take cold these days."

"Why, of course, I'll get one." John returned to the hall. But the choice was limited, and he finally selected a ridiculously small woolen cap which didn't begin to go onto the back of his head. Phillip laughed loudly when he saw it.

"You're a sight!" he said. "Look just like Tommy Dutton of our class. He has a head like a big cannon ball and always wears a funny little green cap at the back of it. You can't see the cap until Tommy has gone by. That's Margaret's, isn't it, Margey? And, I say, you've got his!"

"It's of no consequence," murmured John. "I can wear this beautifully if you don't mind."

Margaret removed the sombrero and viewed it in astonishment that speedily gave place to dismay. The colour flooded into her face as she held the hat toward John.

"I didn't notice," she said. "I'm very sorry. Will you change with me, please?"

John did so.

"I'm sure you didn't know," he answered gravely, taking pity on her confusion and forbearing to utter any one of the numerous gallant things that came into his mind.

"There's a penalty, isn't there?" laughed Phillip.

Margaret pretended that she had not heard, and John smiled at her brother ferociously and ranged himself alongside.

"I'll break your neck if you don't shut up, Phil!" he muttered pleasantly.

Phillip grinned back. "I wish I could blush the way you can, John," he whispered.

Later they rode; and John decided that if Margaret was captivating in the simple gowns he had seen her wear she was adorable in her close-fitting black habit. The way in which she managed the unruly Cardinal was marvelous, and John, trotting alongside on his staid mare, Ruby, experienced a vast contempt for his own horsemanship. They went westward, around the "hog-back," over a broad, well-traveled highway which Phillip explained had been built during the war by the Northern army, past smiling, sunlit fields and comfortable, broad-porched houses. As they swept abreast up a hill Phillip reined in and listened intently with hand at ear.

"What is it, Phil?" Margaret turned her horse and joined him.

"I thought I heard a whistle," he answered. John listened but caught only the stirring of the

wind in the trees beside them. Phillip pointed to the roadway.

"It's been by here not very long ago," he said. Margaret nodded. John looked perplexedly from the road to Phillip.

"What is it," he asked; "Injuns?"

"No; engine," answered Margaret.

"It's a traction engine," Phillip explained. "It's been up along here, and I thought I heard a whistle. Ruby can't stand traction engines and I reckon Cardinal would simply throw a fit if we met one. I reckon we'd better turn back."

"But it's just as likely to have gone toward town as this way, Phil," Margaret objected; "and I did want Mr. North to see the view from Pine Top."

"All right," Phillip assented doubtfully. "When we get to the top we can see what's doing."

"'Tracking the Traction Engine, or Wild Life in Virginia,' " laughed John. "I'll write it up for the *Advocate*."

"No, send it to the *Illustrated*," answered Phillip, "with our photographs."

They went on up the hill, which was long but of easy ascent, and which at the summit turned abruptly to the right around a wooded promontory. Cardinal

broke impatiently into a canter and John's mare laid back her ears and strove to catch up with him. They reached the summit and the turn girth to girth. Then several things happened within the instant.

A dozen yards ahead of them, drawn up to the side of the road, stood the traction engine, sizzling and wheezing. Several forms moved about it, and even in the brief instant that John looked a sudden spurt of steam arose, there was a diabolical screech, and the monster trundled slowly forward. At sight of the engine both horses had flung back, snorting with fear. The mare plunged and circled, while Cardinal, wheeling suddenly in a very madness of terror, struck her, shoulder to thigh, nearly unseating John, and leaped forward down the hill.

Margaret had been riding with slack reins and was wholly unprepared, and ere she could bring her weight upon the curb Cardinal was in full and head-long flight. Phillip, riding several yards behind, with the scene at the summit hidden from his sight by the trees, heard the whistle and dug his spurs. Winchester raced toward the top of the hill, and at the same moment Cardinal swept by, narrowly missing him. In a panic Phillip sawed at the mouth of Winchester and strove to turn him, but before

he had succeeded the mare, too, rushed by, her eyes showing white, John bent low over her neck.

Cardinal had made good use of his start. Down the whole interminable length of that slowly winding hill he was not once in sight to John's straining eyes. Trees and fences whirled by. Ruby's hoofs thundered on the hard roadbed as she leaped onward, head outstretched, wild with fear. It was a mad ride in which a slip or stumble meant probable death to both rider and horse. But John, with the merest suggestion of restraint on the bridle-reins, gave no thought to danger, but leaned forward over the pommel, his eyes fixed anxiously on the farthest stretch of road, his heart leaden with fear for Margaret. Only once did he look aside. A black derby lay by the fence, and he groaned aloud as he thought of what might meet his sight beyond.

Then the last turn was passed, the road stretched straight ahead, level and brown in the sunlight, and John gasped with relief, closing his eyes with a momentary qualm of giddiness. Less than an eighth of a mile away was Cardinal and his rider. The horse was still running hard, but John saw that Margaret sat erect in her saddle. The mare gave signs of flagging—was forgetting her fear under

physical distress. John shouted her on, striking her madly on head and neck with the reins, and cursed his stupidity in having come out without spurs. Then he heard hoof-beats behind him and turned to glance backward. Winchester, with Phillip sitting pale-faced in the saddle, was overtaking him. The horse's neck was flecked with foam and he was bleeding in the flanks from the roweling he had received. In a moment the two horses were neck and neck.

"She's safe now—I think!" shouted Phillip.

John made no answer, but urged the mare forward. With a snort she obeyed and side by side the two raced on. For a minute a line of trees hid Cardinal and the black figure upon him from the sight of the pursuers, and in that moment John suffered tortures. Yet when his eyes again found them he saw that the interim had told on the runaway and that the vigour had gone from his pace. After that they began to come up with him perceptibly. Half a mile farther they were but a hundred yards or so behind. John turned and shouted above the pounding of the hoofs:

"She's broke something!"

"Curb-rein!" answered Phillip.

Margaret glanced around; then they saw her settle back in her saddle and saw her elbows working as she bent all her strength on the reins. Cardinal's head came up, he plunged once or twice, and then came down to a canter as the pursuers caught up with him. Phillip and John flung themselves from their horses and the former seized Cardinal's bridle. Margaret dropped the reins and put her hands to her head; her hair had come undone and was hanging down in long brown plaits. When John saw her face he found it pale but smiling.

"You're all right!" he asked hoarsely.

"Yes." She leaned forward, folding her hands upon the pommel. "I didn't mind after we were off the hill."

John placed his own hand over hers. She felt it trembling and looked down at him in surprise, her brown eyes narrowing a little as they met his.

"I thought—I feared——!" He broke off with a gulp, his white face working convulsively. Margaret's eyes dropped, and the colour, which had begun to steal back into her cheeks, fled again quickly. She withdrew her hands slowly from under his and her voice was uncertain.

"I'm sorry I gave you both such a fright."

"Shucks!" cried Phillip, gazing wrathfully at Cardinal; "it wasn't your fault! I'll kill this brute when I get him home!"

"No, Phil, you mustn't hurt Cardinal. It wasn't his fault either. He was more scared than any of us. It was that awful engine."

"Your gloves are torn!" exclaimed John. She held them up smilingly; each was ripped up the palm. "Let me take them off," he begged. She hesitated and then held them down. John peeled them off one after the other, leaving bare two red and swollen hands.

"The brute!" he muttered, looking at them commiseratingly. Margaret tried to withdraw them, but he held them fast.

"Are they hurt?" he asked.

"No; but my hair——"

He bent over, and, ere Margaret knew what he was doing, pressed both palms to his lips.

"Poor little hands!" he said softly.

Margaret gave a little gasp and tore them away. With crimson cheeks and averted head she strove to fix her hair. John turned to Phillip. If the latter had seen he gave no evidence of the fact, but was examining the broken rein.

"Your sister must take my horse the rest of the way," John said.

"All right; and you can have Winchester."

"No," said John grimly; "I want the other. I like him. I think we shall get on finely together." He stroked Cardinal's quivering muzzle. "You'd like me to ride you back, wouldn't you, you nice, sensible horsie?" he muttered. "You wouldn't run away with me, would you? You don't want your damned neck broken, do you? I'd like to own you for about ten minutes, you dear thing!"

Phillip laughed. "I don't reckon I'll trust him to you, John. You take Winchester."

"You may both keep your own horses," interrupted Margaret. "I shall ride Cardinal myself."

"Nonsense," cried Phillip.

"I shall; he is all right now, Phil; he's tired to death." She gathered up the reins with a little determined smile.

"Pardon me, Miss Ryerson, for interfering," said John, "but I don't think Cardinal can be trusted. He's awfully nervous. I don't think you ought to stay on him."

Their eyes met. John's were steady and Margaret's

gleamed with the light of battle. Her face was pale and there was a set smile about the mouth.

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness, Mr. North," she answered calmly, "but I don't think there is any danger now. Mount, gentlemen!"

John gazed at her with annoyance and admiration mingled. Phillip hesitated doubtfully with his foot in the stirrup.

"She's splendid," thought John, "but she ought to be pulled out of that saddle and kissed until she behaves!"

"Come, Cardinal!" called Margaret gaily. But she was watching John from the corners of her eyes and a tight rein countermanded her own order; Cardinal stood still. John drew his horse toward her and made a pretense of examining Cardinal's girth. Then he said in tones that only Margaret could hear:

"Get out of that saddle at once. I won't have you killed, even if you want it. If you're not on the ground before I count ten *I'll—do—it—again!*"

He seized her nearest hand. "One!"

She stared down at him haughtily, the colour flooding her face and her eyes darkening.

"Two!"

"Three !

"Four !"

"Let go of my hand, please," she said angrily but in low tones.

"Five !

"Six !"

"If you dare——!" But her voice trembled.

"*Seven!*"

"What the deuce are you two up to?" asked Phillip.

"*Eight!*"

"I—I think I'll let Mr. North ride Cardinal," said Margaret unsteadily. "Will you help me off, Phil?"

"Why, John will do it," replied Phillip wonderingly.

Margaret bit her lips and stared fixedly at Cardinal's drooping ears.

"*Nine!*" said John in a polite, conversational tone. His grasp on her hand tightened. She cast a frightened glance at Phillip, who had mounted and was wheeling Winchester toward home. Her eyes filled as she dropped the reins and took her knee from the horn. John held up his hands and she slipped to the ground.

"I hate you!" she sobbed.

"I love you!" he whispered.

CHAPTER XVII

THE overseer came to supper that night, looking very uncomfortable in his "party clothes," and added fifty per cent. to the gaiety of the occasion. He had a wealth of good stories which, while familiar to the others, were new to John, and told them deliciously, with many a "Gingeration!" and "By doggie, sir!" John was sensible of a quite unaccustomed feeling of exhilaration, and his high spirits plainly surprised Phillip. Mrs. Ryerson coquetted ceremoniously and impartially with both guests, while Margaret's animation verged almost on frivolity.

"It seems to do you good to be run away with," Phillip told her.

"It does," she smiled. "I like it!"

"If I was some younger, Miss Margey," cried Markham with a courtly bow, "I'd take yo' at yo' word! By doggie, yes, ma'am!"

"Oh, dear! I so wish you were!" Margaret sighed.

Phillip's eyebrows went up. This was a new Margey.

But if she was all graciousness to Markham she was but calm, unadorned politeness to John North. He was never for a moment allowed to forget that she hated him. When he spoke to her the smiles disappeared and she replied in the fewest number of words consistent with courtesy. Her manner said: "You are my hated foe; but you are also my guest!"

And John throve on her displeasure and grew merrier with every proof of it.

Arrangements for the fox hunt were completed ere they left the table, and afterward they played whist before the drawing-room fire, Margaret and John against Phillip and Tom Markham. John watched Margaret's efforts to avoid playing with him with carefully concealed amusement. In the end she defeated her own purpose.

"I'm such a frightfully poor player," she lamented, "it would be a shame to spoil Mr. North's pleasure by making us partners."

"That's just it," cried Phillip. "You are pretty rotten, Margey, but John's one of the crack members of the Harvard Whist Club, and so that evens it up. Come along, now."

So Margaret accepted the inevitable and took the place opposite John, where he could look into her face every time he raised his eyes from his cards. They had foemen worthy of their trumps. Phillip was a good player, while Markham went in for whist as he went in for everything else, with a concentration and singleness of purpose that was delightful to behold and which made him a formidable antagonist. It is to be feared that Margaret purposely vindicated the reputation she had claimed. Surely, never before were so many good cards wasted, so many aces trumped, such a blind disregard of science and signals exhibited! But if her purpose was to ruffle her partner's temper, she won not the slightest vestige of success. John's tranquillity remained impervious. Phillip wondered and exclaimed:

"Good heavens, Margey! What were you up to then? You're playing fifty times worse than I ever knew you to—and that's saying a heap!"

"Thank you, Phil, dear!"

"John will think you were raised in—in—I don't know what—where!"

"I am very sorry," answered Margaret very gravely, "but I warned Mr. North of what to expect."

"Really, I think your playing is very good, Miss Ryerson," interposed John, with equal gravity. "For my part, I am quite satisfied. And if you're satisfied and I'm satisfied, where does Phil come in? Nowhere. Your lead, Mr. Markham."

Now there was a bit of polite perjury that should have won the thanks and admiration of any one in Margaret's place. Yet, for some reason, the effect on Margaret was quite the reverse of pleasing and did not soften her heart and move her to reform; on the contrary, she played worse than before and exasperated Phillip to fresh remonstrance.

"Margey! You did it again that hand!"

"Did what, Phil?"

"Why, trumped his ace!"

"Did I? Did I trump your ace, Mr. North?"

"I believe you did," John answered calmly.

"But I don't think Phil understands your play."

"No, hanged if I do!" muttered Phillip.

"While I do—perfectly."

Margaret frowned suspiciously and had the grace to blush. And John saw the blush and thought it lovely and played a card that caused Tom Markham's hands to tremble with triumph. Yet, despite all handicaps—not the least of which was his inability

to keep his eyes on the game—John won out at the end, and Markham drew his long length carefully from his chair and sighed enviously.

“Gingeration, Mr. No’t’h, sir ! I just wish I could play the game the way you can. I never saw anything like it ! It’s a pleasure, sir, to be defeated by you, sir ! By doggie, yes, sir !”

John sat for a full half-hour in front of the fire in his bedroom, attired only in a suit of red-and-white pajamas, and smoked his pipe and watched the flames. He didn’t always see the flames, however, and his thoughts were at least the length of the house from them. He reviewed the day’s events and grew cold at recollection of that frightful and anxious race down Pine Top, and warm at the memory of what had followed. He wondered whether he had made a mistake in “showing his hand” so early in the game, and believed he hadn’t. On its face it appeared a reckless, impossible, even frivolous thing to make a declaration of love—even an off-hand one—twenty-four hours after first meeting a woman. But John found extenuating circumstances. In the first place, it had been entirely unpremeditated. In the second place, his acquaintanceship with Margaret was not limited to twenty-four

hours; he had known her ever since he had known Phillip. Corliss' allusion to her had aroused his curiosity and sympathy and appealed to his imagination. He had fallen in love with her the moment he had seen her picture on Phillip's mantel. His passion—not a very deep one then, perhaps—had been fed by their short correspondence and by the constant mention of her name and news of her doings doled out by Phillip. And then he had seen her in the flesh! And now it was all confirmed, established, irrevocable!

No, he didn't believe he had hurt his chances by his impulsive words. He was not an expert in affairs of the heart. Had he ever felt the slightest desire to do so—which he never did—he could have counted his love affairs on the fingers of one hand and still, perhaps, have a thumb left untapped. He had never made a study of the pleasant art of making love, yet he had learned somehow that interest must precede affection, and had a strong suspicion that no woman can fail to feel interest in a man who has declared his love for her, no matter how indifferent to his passion she may be.

No; on the whole he was very well satisfied with his second day at Elaine. It did not occur to him

as among the possibilities that Margaret could really cherish resentment against him for what he had done. She was beautiful to him in every way, and he loved her. Then why not tell her so? It was the natural thing to do, and he had done it. To be sure, she was justified in finding fault with his method; he owned to himself that he had been rather crude, almost discourteous; and on that score she was right to show displeasure. But in the end——

He knocked the ashes from his pipe and pulled himself erect, yawning cavernously. The fire was low and little chills were sporting up and down his back. He blew out the light and crawled into the four-poster.]

In the end she must love him. His college career would come to an end in June; after that should come another career in which his curriculum should be Margaret and of which the degree should be Margaret's love. But suddenly his pleasant confidence received a shock. What if there should be——was——some one else?

He sat up and blinked in consternation at the fire-light. What about that other chap, that cousin? What was his name? Willis? Who the deuce was this Willis and where did he come in? He dropped

his head back on the pillow. He would find out about this Nate—that was it!—Nate Willis. He would—ask Phillip—in—the morn——

Then he commenced snoring peacefully.

Sunday came and went, and Monday, and Tuesday, with untroubled skies, brisk, mellow noons and frosty nights. The ice formed hard on the little ponds and they went skating. And they shot more partridges, and rode and drove; and to John every moment was filled with pleasure. And yet his love affair progressed not at all. Strive as he might to find or beguile Margaret away from the companionship of Mrs. Ryerson or Phillip or from the mysterious duties that kept her so much of the time in that impenetrable region of the house reigned over by Aunt Cicely, he was always unsuccessful. To be sure—and here was doubtful cause for self-gratulation—Margaret's manner toward him was what it had been of old, before she had found it necessary to hate him. But John wasn't satisfied.

Meanwhile he had disposed of Nate Willis—or, rather, Phillip had done it for him. And no other pretender had appeared on the horizon. John found encouragement in these facts. But meanwhile, too, his stay at Elaine was already half over, for he had

promised David to come to him in New York the next Sunday. He sighed dolefully and for a minute entertained the wild idea of telegraphing David that he was dead and couldn't join him. But, as he realized with a grin the next moment, that wouldn't do, for Davy would be certain to come down to the funeral.

The fox hunt had been highly successful. That is to say, from certain viewpoints. Margaret and Phillip and the indefatigable Colonel Brownell—who looked every minute of his sixty-eight years and rode to hounds like a youngster—had been in at the death, while John, accompanied by Tom Markham, whose courtesy and hospitality would not allow him to leave the guest behind, had plodded unexcitedly along some half-mile in the rear. John's clothes bore streaks and large expanses of brown earth on one side, as did Ruby's knees, that all who rode might read. John did not mind the spill over a tumble-down fence onto a frost-cracked ground, but he did mind seeing his hopes of a talk—desultory, perchance, but still a talk—with Margaret come to naught. For that is just what had happened. As soon as ever they were off Cardinal had sprung to the front of the field of some dozen horses, and

John's efforts to come up to her on Ruby were unavailing. He had urged on the mare vigourously, but she was no match for Cardinal, and the hurry accomplished only a sudden tumble of horse and rider, luckily without painful results.

The hunters rode homeward in a bunch, Colonel Brownell and two younger men from the village completely frustrating any designs John may have entertained of riding beside Margaret. He fell back on the society of Phillip and Tom Markham, and, since their route lay over the better part of three adjoining estates, learned much of interest regarding farming methods, soil qualities, cattle-grazing and land values. From a hill his companions indicated the confines of Elaine on three sides, and for the first time he began to have some conception of what the care of 1,600 acres meant. He viewed Markham with increased interest and new respect.

"Can this cattle business be made to pay, Mr. Markham?" he asked, as they rode onward toward the home farm, which was just in sight toward the north.

"Yes, sir, by doggie, Mr. No'th! But yo' need money, sir. Yo' got to buy when cattle are cheap an' yo' got to have ready cash to do it. That's the

trouble with a heap of folks 'round here, Mr. No'th; they aint got the cash ready to plank right down when it's needed."

"It's going to pay for us, isn't it, Tom?" asked Phillip. "You wait until I get through college and you'll see! I'm going to make a different place of Elaine!"

John was silent, and Markham looked away and worked his long jaws hurriedly, generously decorating the roadside with tobacco juice.

"There's most too much land here, Phil," he said presently.

"I don't think so, Tom; the more land the more grass, and the more grass the more cattle we can handle. Besides, it wouldn't do to sell any part of Elaine. Why, I'd rather—rather let it grow up in timber again!"

"There's going to be money in timber 'round here mighty soon," said the overseer. "Everybody's cuttin' it down like all git out."

"What does lumber cost around here?" asked John. Markham looked over at him gratefully and the conversation turned into new channels.

Christmas Day dawned bright and clear but colder than any since John had been there. Uncle Casper

made his appearance rather late, rubbing his hands briskly, and wearing a half-frozen appearance.

"Pow'ful cold, sir, this mawnin'," he volunteered as he laid the fire. "Ev'ything's friz up tight; yes, sir. Reckon, though, you folkses up No'th has it a heap colder'n this, sir?"

"Yes, Uncle, we wouldn't call this anything where I come from. I see your wood lights all right?"

"Sir? Yes, sir."

"Oh, well, it isn't really cold then. When it gets so that the wood freezes and won't catch fire we call it chilly up North."

The darky paused with a flaring pine splinter in his benumbed fingers and stared with round eyes.

"'Fore Gawd, Mister No'th!" he ejaculated finally. "I never heard tell of that. Whoo—ee! No, sir, I reckon we jus' don't know what cold is, sir. My nephew he works up in New Yo'k; he's a waiter in a mons'rous big hotel up there. He done tol' me that they fust winter he was there he come mighty nigh perishin' with they cold; yes, sir. But, Lordie, sir, I didn't s'pect it was like that!" He ambled out, shaking his head and muttering volubly.

When Will returned from Melville with the mail

he also bore two packages, one addressed to Mrs. Ryerson and one to Margaret. When opened they divulged great, long-stemmed red roses and in the little envelopes were John's cards; he had ordered the blossoms by mail from Washington. Margaret loved flowers, and the gift dispelled the last of her resentment toward John, a resentment which during the past two days she had experienced much difficulty in keeping alive. John surmised his complete forgiveness and was comforted. Somehow, despite that in the kitchen preparation of a big Christmas dinner was going forward, Margaret found more leisure from household duties that day than on any day since John had transgressed, and she made no efforts to avoid his society.

The mail brought letters to John and one to Phillip—at least, it resembled a letter in outward appearance. But when, in the seclusion of his room, Phillip tore it madly open, he found only a small photograph. But he didn't seem disappointed. On the back of the picture were the words, penned in large, stylish and very illegible characters, "Phillip from Betty." Although he kept it in the breast pocket of his jacket all day—and for many days thereafter—and referred to it

surreptitiously whenever occasion allowed, it was not exhibited to any one, not even to John. The latter's letters were from his mother and David. The former spoke encouragingly of his father's health. The letter was written from Mentone.

"The doctor spent Friday and Saturday with us here and was much pleased with your father's condition. He says that if the improvement continues until spring there will be no good reason for staying abroad longer than April. Of course your father is delighted; he is already busy planning for the trip home. I hope the excitement will not undo any of the good work, and I do hope above all else that he won't be disappointed. I, too, dearest, will be glad to get home once more. It seems ages and ages since we left. The doctor even thinks that next winter your father can safely remain there, in some mild climate like Asheville or Aiken. That seems almost too much to hope for, doesn't it? But we shall see. I think we shall close up the Worcester house, John, for it seems scarcely worth while keeping it up unless you expect to be there for any length of time in the Summer. Your father talks of going into the Adirondacks, and if we do, of course we shall want you to be with us all the time, or as much

of the time as you can give us. He sends his love and a little present, which must do for both of us, since I really don't know what to give you, dearest, that you would care for. I hope you are enjoying your visit in Virginia. Your father wants you to write and tell him about the country there, and says you're to stop and see Mr. Corliss on your way back."

John placed the check in his pocketbook and thoughtfully nibbled a corner of the letter, staring out of the hall window across the pleasant, peaceful prospect of sunny hill and valley. It was mid-morning, and the frozen crust of earth was softening under the warmth of the sun; the file of turkeys as they picked their way across the drive left three-pronged footprints on the gravel. In the trees the birds were chirping busily.

"Coming back," John muttered. "Jove, that's good news! And—yes, I think I can manage it!" He smiled as though well pleased with his thoughts, and opened David's epistle. This was characteristically brief and to the point. Life had been going very slowly with the writer and he blamed it all on John's absence. He wished the latter a Merry Christmas, and informed him that he had bought a

present for him—it didn't amount to much—and that he would have sent it if he hadn't misplaced it somewhere. "But I'll look it up and have it ready for you when you arrive," he wrote. "You're coming Sunday. Don't forget. If you don't come I swear I'll go down to Virginia and bring you back bodily. Also I'll give you a damned good hiding.

"Yours faith'ly, DAVID."

"P. S.—The governor has presented me with a dangerous-looking automobile thing. It is a lovely crimson. You pull things and it goes. I can make it go finely, but I haven't found out yet how to stop it. When you come we'll try it in the park.

"P. S. No. 2.—How's Margaret?"

Dinner was an event that day. The overseer was there and a certain "Uncle Bob," a younger brother of Mrs. Ryerson, who lived in Richmond. In the evening a handful of young persons of both sexes came out from Melville and there was an informal dance, and, what pleased "Uncle Bob" much more, a monstrous bowl of punch which stood in the hall wreathed with holly and mistletoe.

John danced with Margaret as often as she would allow, and amazedly wondered why dancing had never really appealed to him before that evening.

No mention was made on either side of the incident of Saturday's ride. John understood that he had been forgiven and that Margaret had reinstated him in her good graces, but that there was to be no repetition of the offense under penalty of renewed excommunication. And to this decree John for the present bowed submissively.

About midnight the visitors left, professing great consternation at a thin veneer of snow which covered the drive, and talking muck of being snowed in on the way to town, and John and "Uncle Bob" formed themselves into a rescue party, protesting their readiness to do battle against the element with brooms and dust pans. Afterward the rescue party and Phillip and Tom Markham retired to the library to smoke. "Uncle Bob" insisted upon taking the still undepleted punch bowl with him, and at half past one John and Phillip assisted the Richmond relative to his room. Markham took himself off intensely serious and dignified, but it was noticeable that he experienced unaccustomed difficulty in climbing into his saddle.

Phillip, with the memory of that famous affair at the theatre in mind, had followed John's example and had spared the punch.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next day dawned warm and fair. After breakfast John lounged out to the porch, while Phillip went upstairs to see his mother, on whom the excitement of the evening before had told not a little. "Uncle Bob" had not appeared at breakfast, but had sent word that he had a touch of gout and would stay in his room for awhile. The message summoned a wink from Phillip and caused Margaret to smile demurely behind the coffee urn.

John lighted a cigar and seated himself in the sun with his back against one of the ferocious lions, one knee well up under his chin and his heel kicking idly at the granite block. Before him the driveway swept sloping away invitingly toward the park gate. He wondered whether Margaret would go for a stroll with him if he penetrated to the kitchen regions and asked her. He had made up his mind to go in search of her, when footsteps sounded behind him and Margaret appeared in the doorway. He tossed away his cigar and jumped to his feet.

"Won't you come out?" he begged. "It's so nice here in the sun." She nodded smilingly, disappeared, and in a moment came out with a little cape about her shoulders. John pulled forward a chair, but she took a seat on the step and he went back to his lion. For awhile they talked of the dance, of the townsfolk, of gout-ridden "Uncle Bob," of Virginia weather, and finally of Cambridge and the approaching term.

"And in June you're all through college?" asked Margaret. "Are you sorry?"

"Yes, I think so. I'm glad that I'm through with it and sorry I've got to go away. One gets to know so many good fellows, and grows to like Cambridge so well that he rather hates to pack up for good. My roommate—his name's Meadowcamp; perhaps Phil has spoken of him? After he finished last year he began a graduate course. I've always told him that it was because he was too lazy to move away. But now, just lately, I've begun to think that it was chiefly because Davy hated to leave college; a fellow gets so used to it all in the four years. I know that I shall feel rather lost and out of it when September comes and I find I'm not back in Cambridge." He paused and looked thoughtfully

across the lawn. "Davy—Meadowcamp, you know—wants me to take a graduate course, and I'm almost tempted to do it. But—well, there would be little use in it. It isn't as though I was preparing myself for something definite, you see. I suppose I could study law. That's a good excuse for staying there; but I haven't the slightest desire to become a lawyer. I'd never win a case, I know."

"What are you going to be?" Margaret asked. John smiled, then frowned and gave a shrug.

"That's the question," he answered. "My father would like me to take hold of his business with him. He makes wire nails in an immense ugly brick building that covers acres of ground in Worcester. Perhaps I shall. I don't like it, though. Besides, my father isn't really as keen about it as he used to be. A few years ago he owned the whole thing himself and thought of nothing else but wire nails—almost lived in his office and just about ruined his health; he's been abroad now for three years as a result. Then the trust came along and gobbled up the factory. Father's vice-president of the trust now and makes much more money than he used to; but he isn't specially happy and he has rather lost interest. It isn't the same as being the whole thing

yourself, you see, Miss Ryerson. And I don't believe he'd feel very badly if I balked at wire nails."

"But what do you want to be?" Margaret leaned forward, her chin in her hand, and observed him curiously.

"I don't know," replied John vexedly. "I wish I did. I've often wished that we had just enough money to live on quietly; then, I guess, I'd have to be something, and I should probably know what. Just now it looks as though I should be a loafer. Do you like loafers, Miss Ryerson?"

Margaret shook her head.

"Then I shan't be one," he said, smilingly. "I——" He stopped and studied his hands for a moment. "When I said I don't know what I want to be I wasn't quite telling the truth. I do know what I want to be and what I want to do. Only it seems so idiotic that I'm rather ashamed to tell you." He looked up for encouragement and found it in the little grave smile she gave.

"Well, since I came down here and have seen this country, and seen the jolly, quiet, healthful sort of life you Virginians lead, I—I've wanted to come here, too, and live among these hills and fields. I'd

like to buy land here and farm it, and ride and hunt and shoot now and then, and wear out my old clothes, and live quietly and contentedly and respectably all my life and die of gout at a good old age."

Margaret laughed quietly and shook her head. "I'm glad you like our country and the way we live," she said gravely, "but I don't think it would do for you. You'd like it well enough at first, I don't doubt; but then you'd get tired of our humdrum life and tired of farming, and you'd long to get back to the world you know. Besides, there's more in farming than appears on the surface, Mr. North, and I fear you couldn't learn it in a year, or even five."

"I know that. And when I said farming I was thinking of cattle."

"But what I said of farming is just as true of cattle. I'm afraid it wouldn't pay."

"But I wouldn't care a great deal if it didn't. It would be an occupation. Lots of occupations don't pay."

"You'd be just a kind of idler, then, wouldn't you? I mean, you wouldn't be accomplishing anything for yourself or for any one else. It's so

easy to do things that don't pay and that lead to nothing."

"You're terribly discouraging," laughed John, more than half vexed. "For that matter, perhaps it would pay. I could get a good overseer and let him do the managing."

"While you did the riding and shooting and hunting and acquired the gout?" She shook her head. "That wouldn't do."

"Well," he answered, "I hadn't thought very seriously of trying it, Miss Ryerson, but now—I believe I'll do it if only to show you that I can."

"I should be sorry to have anything I've said lead you into losing your money, Mr. North. And so I'll take everything back. You could do it beautifully; being a Northerner, you would, of course, understand our way of doing things; having had a good college education you would, naturally, be thoroughly fitted to buy and sell cattle at a profit; and good overseers are found everywhere; and with a good overseer—— But, dear me, what am I saying? *Without* a good overseer, Mr. North, there is not the least doubt in the world but that you'd become immensely wealthy in a very short time—say two or three years."

She still leaned with chin in palm, and the little smiling, half-mocking expression in the warm brown eyes tempted John to do rash things. With an effort he laughed lightly.

"You're right, of course," he said. "I'm an idiot to think of such things. And it is only kindness, I know, that prompts you to show me my absolute incapacity and impracticability. Only—well, it's a bit jarring to my vanity."

"That's not kind," she answered. "I've said nothing about incapacity. I know you're not incapable; Phil has told us enough about you to prove that, Mr. North. And I reckon you're very practical. Maybe you could come here and buy land and make it pay you; I think you could if any Northerner could. There," she smiled, "does your vanity feel better?"

"Much, thank you."

"But," she continued, serious again, "I don't think even you could do it. We're different from you people; we do things differently; we're slower and easier-going; I reckon we're what you say we are—shiftless."

John strove to expostulate, but she went on:

"But it's our way—the way we were taught and

brought up and the way we're used to. And you'd have trouble with your hands, too. Negroes aren't what they were once; they're shiftless and lazy, and won't work except when they have to—at least, that's true of the negroes around here. Good overseers are hard to find, Mr. North, and there aren't many at the best. If you could find one, perhaps—— But I wouldn't make the experiment."

"Thank you. I've no doubt but that what you say is true; I'm sure you must know if any one does. Although," he added, "it sounds odd to hear you talking about these things so intimately."

"I suppose it does, but I've learned them; and I've seen one or two experiments of the sort you speak of tried hereabouts. At least, you must acknowledge that I am disinterested, Mr. North. I might have encouraged you and then sold you part of Elaine. You know it is for sale?"

"Yes," answered John, "I know. It's a shame, Miss Ryerson. I shouldn't think you could stand the thought of —of parting with it."

"I can't. And so I don't think of it—much."

"But—wouldn't it be possible to do something else? Couldn't you lease it?"

"We might, but that would only be putting off

the inevitable. I reckon you don't know how poor we are, Mr. North," she said with a little troubled smile. "I think I'd like to tell you. Even mamma doesn't know—quite."

"I shall feel honoured, Miss Ryerson," he answered earnestly. "But if it—well, if it hurts to talk about it, please don't."

"I think it would do me good to tell some one," she answered gravely. "And since we've already made a sort of—family counselor of you, Mr. North, I know you won't mind playing the part of a father confessor, too. Your kindness to Phil and to us——"

"Please don't say anything more about that, Miss Ryerson," John pleaded. "I feel like a hypocrite whenever you mention my services. If you only knew how very little I've done—scarcely anything, really—and what a pleasure that little has been, you'd understand that all the obligation is on my part."

Margaret shook her head again as one unconvinced.

"I won't speak of it if you don't wish it," she said softly, "but I shall always remember it and shall always be very, very grateful." She turned away

from him, clasped her hands over one knee and looked off across the sloping lawn and meadow. Then: "I fear, though, you don't believe very strongly in our—in my gratitude after—after my rudeness to you." Her head was turned farther away until he could see only one cheek, on which the colour came and went as she spoke.

"Rudeness!" he exclaimed. "Great heavens, please don't say that! You weren't rude enough! You——"

"I behaved very childishly," she continued, without, however, turning toward him. "I want to ask your pardon and I want you to know that—that my behaviour didn't mean that I wasn't grateful to you all the time. We—we're rather barbarians down here, Mr. North, and have tempers!"

"Miss Ryerson! Margaret! I beg your pardon," he caught himself up. "But please don't talk about asking my pardon. I ought to have asked yours long ago! I do now! I behaved like a brute that day. I know I did. But—but won't you please believe that I didn't mean any disrespect? You must believe that! Won't you?"

"Yes," she answered instantly. "I didn't believe otherwise. And you—and Phil—were right in not

wanting me to ride Cardinal back. I don't know what had gotten into me; I'm not always so mean and stubborn. And—and you—Phil says you rode breakneck down the hill after me. You might have been killed!" There was a little pause, during which Margaret continued to watch her interlacing fingers, and John, rather pale of face, looked hungrily at the rounded cheek on which the sun threw little flecks of light. "Thank you for that," she added softly. "And forgive me for my rudeness at—at what was—I understood it afterward, you see—just a sort of joke."

"Joke!" breathed John. He leaned forward and laid one hand over her fingers. They ceased their moving and she turned toward him with wide, startled eyes. "Margaret," he said softly, "don't thank me for anything, please. I don't deserve it. I behaved like a brute! I hurt you when you were nervous, upset, after that danger. Why," he went on with a sudden drop of his voice which trembled like the hands imprisoned under his own, "why, rather than hurt you, Margaret, I'd—I'd do anything in the world!"

She turned her face away with a slow closing of her eyes, and strove to draw her hands from beneath his.

“I—I—please——”

“And don’t forgive me because you think it was all a joke, Margaret. It wasn’t, not a bit of it, dear! I kissed your hand because—because I couldn’t help kissing the poor, bruised little thing! I said I loved you because it was God’s truth, Margaret! I do love you—then—before that—now—always! How much, how dearly, I haven’t words to say! I was mean, brutal, if you like, dear, but I wasn’t joking.”

He ended with a little break in his voice. His hand slipped away from hers.

“Now,” he added, pale and half fearful, “you may forgive me—if you can.”

For many moments Margaret sat motionless, her hands still loosely clasped, her face averted. John waited anxiously, breathing hard, possessed with an almost fierce exultation for that he had proclaimed himself her lover and that, whatever happened, no longer could she consider him as merely her brother’s friend, an acquaintance to be smiled upon politely and dismissed from her thoughts. Whether she sent him away or bade him remain, he was her lover, a factor in her life. Whether she ever cared for him or not, at least she

could never forget him; as long as she lived the mention of his name must summon recollection. All this would be but poor consolation for losing her, but now, as he waited for her to speak, he found a fierce comfort in the knowledge that already it was beyond her power to put him entirely from her life.

When at length she turned her face to him it was paler than his own and the little smile that quivered about the lips was one of pain. Her eyes met his bravely, infinitely tender. John read his answer and his heart sank; but he gave back her smile.

"I'm so sorry," she whispered.

John nodded and looked away. He wanted to say something, but the right words would not come; he could only smile. It came to him with a shock that he had allowed himself to hope too much; that, despite pretense of reckoning with possible disappointment, he had not, in reality, considered it. The sunlit world suddenly looked sickeningly blank. Perhaps Margaret read something of all this in his expression. When she spoke again her voice held pain and regret.

"There's so much I'd like to say," she murmured. "But—I don't know how. I wish—I want you to

believe that I am sorry, more sorry than I can tell you. And I thank you very, very much for the honour, for it is an honour that a woman may be proud of, Mr. North. Oh, tell me this, please: have I been to blame?"

"To blame! You!"

"I mean have I done anything, said anything to make you think—that I might—care for you?"

"Great heavens, no!" John protested. "It has been all my fault. But, no, not a fault; I won't call it that. It would have been a fault not to have loved you. I—I've made a mistake in telling you, that is all, Miss Ryerson. Please don't think of it any more; don't let it trouble you. It—it'll be all right."

"Will it?" she asked wistfully. "I hope so, oh, I do hope so! I never thought—if I had suspected for a moment, I would have done something—gone away——"

"It would have been too late," said John gravely. "You see, the mischief was already done. Phil had your picture in his room; I saw it away last fall. Then he talked of you often; read little bits sometimes from your letters; until I seemed to almost know you. Then your own letter came. Of course

it was nothing—but—— Oh, I am such an ass, Miss Ryerson! And then, when I came and saw you that day there at the station—well, it just clinched everything! It was queer; it didn't seem as though I was meeting you for the first time. You were just what I had pictured you, only a hundred times better, lovelier, sweeter!" He paused, felt absent-mindedly for his pipe and placed it in his mouth. Then he took it out, put it back in his pocket, and went on more lightly.

"I didn't mean to tell you to-day—perhaps not at all before I went. But I couldn't bear to let you think I was cad enough to do that as a joke. Perhaps—if I had waited? If I had kept silent until spring or even summer——?"

Margaret shook her head.

"No; it would have been the same. I'm glad you spoke now before—before—— Oh, it is better, isn't it, to have the—the mistake corrected now?"

"I suppose so," he answered without conviction. "Well——"

He broke off and sat staring across the fields, the smile still on his face, and for a long minute there was silence between them. Margaret observed him with an indefinable expression in her dark eyes;

there was regret there, and tenderness, and wonder.

"I wish——" she began.

"What?" he asked.

"Nothing." And then, after another little pause, "But maybe you'd like to know it. I wish—I cared for you."

"You wish that?" he cried with a sudden note of hope in his voice. "Then—then——!"

"No, no, no! Don't misunderstand me, please! I do wish that; yes. I would rather please you than give you pain. If I did care for you I should be glad—and proud to tell you so—and proud of your—love. But I don't—not in the way you want me to."

"It is only pity," he said sadly.

"Yes. . . . I don't know. . . ."

"But I will wait! I could—I could try to make you care for me—that way! Margaret! May I—try?"

"Oh, you will mistake what I mean," she cried regretfully. "Listen; perhaps I can make you understand. When you spoke of coming here to live, and when I tried to discourage you, I was hoping that you'd pay no heed to me and that you would come in spite of all I said. I thought it would be so nice to have you here—coming to see us—and all. And Phil likes you so much, and mamma, too.

You are so big and capable and—and—— Don't you see, it was just selfishness? I wanted you for a friend—some one I could look to for help and advice in my miserable little quandaries. I—I liked you; that is all."

"I see." Presently:

"Yes, I'm glad you told me that; very glad. Please keep right on liking me, if you can. And I——" he turned, facing her with a sudden rigid setting of his jaws and a narrowing of his dark gray eyes, "I'm going to keep on loving you, you know," he said almost fiercely. "You can't help that. And you needn't forbid me," he added, as she made a gesture of dissent. "It's beyond you. And I'm not going to stop hoping until you're—married to some one else. You can't forbid that, either!"

"But I must! You mustn't! Please—please——"

"Do you mean that you could never care for me—under any circumstances—no matter what happened?"

"I—oh, how can I tell what I could do or might do?" she cried. "Only—I feel that it is hopeless—useless!"

"Then—then there is some one else, after all?" he asked dully.

"You have been very patient and kind to me," she replied, "and I will answer that, although you have no right——"

"I know," he interrupted. "I have no right. Don't answer it!"

"I shall; and—there is no one else; no one at all."

Within the house they heard Phillip's voice calling them.

"Thank you," said John. "And now, will you do me one more favour! Will you promise that should you ever grow to care for me you will tell me?"

"Tell you!" she repeated in surprise. "But how could I do that?"

"You could."

"But if I ever did care, I think you'd know it without my telling you," she said with a little smile.

He shook his head.

"I might not. I should be afraid to risk it again."

"But you—you might have grown to—not to care," she objected. Again he shook his head.

"No. I shall keep on caring. You are certain that you will never love me; so the risk is slight. Will you take it? Will you promise?"

"Hello, you lazy folks!" Phillip stood laughing

out upon them from the doorway. "Didn't you hear me yelling like the Bull of—What-do-you-call-it?"

"We wanted to make you hunt us, Phil," answered Margaret lightly. "Exercise is beneficial, dear."

"Exercise! Well, that sounds well coming from a person who has been sitting on the porch all morning," Phillip replied scathingly. Margaret arose and moved toward the door. John followed her. Phillip observed them speculatively.

"Great Scott!" he told himself, "I believe John's been making love to Margey! Or else they've had a quarrel."

At the doorway John laid his hand lightly on Margaret's arm. She stopped on the threshold and turned to him.

"You promise?" he asked softly.

She hesitated and dropped her eyes. Then:

"Yes," she answered.

He stood and watched her lay aside her cape and disappear into the drawing-room. When he turned again toward Phillip he heard the beat of hoofs on the drive.

"Here comes Colonel Brownell," said Phillip. The Colonel trotted up to the portico and

bowed courteously, holding out a buff-coloured envelope.

“Morning, Phil; morning, Mr. North. A telegram for you, sir. Saw it in the post-office, sir, and took the liberty of fetching it along to you.”

John thanked him and took it.

“You’ll stay for dinner, Colonel?” asked Phillip.

“Thank you, Phil; not to-day. I’m on my way over to Prentiss. Good-day, good-day, sir!” The Colonel trotted off, a gallant figure on his little black mare, and John opened his message.

“Don’t dare to go back without stopping. Answer when.

GEORGE CORLISS.”

“Nothing wrong, is there, John?” asked Phillip anxiously.

“No, nothing wrong,” answered John, and he dropped the telegram into his pocket. “But I’m sorry to say, Phil, I’ll have to leave you in the morning.”

CHAPTER XIX

THERE was an early breakfast the next day, for John's train left Melville at a little before eight. He had begged that Margaret would not come down to see him off and she had answered with a non-committal smile. But when he entered the lamp-lighted dining-room she was already seated behind the shimmering urn, fresh and bright. A big fire roared and crackled in the chimney place, for the morning was cold and lowering, and the scene was so warm and cozy and homelike that John was sorely tempted to invent some desperate excuse and remain at Elaine. Why not? he asked himself. Was it incumbent upon him to hurry away merely because Margaret had not thrown herself into his arms at the first opportunity? Why not stay and go on as though yesterday's episode had never been? She liked him; she had owned that; then why not remain and find what pleasure he could in that friendship she was ready to give him? But no, he could not go on as though nothing had happened;

that was impossible. His presence would prove an embarrassment to Margaret every hour of the day. Besides, yesterday's occurrence had proved that he could not trust himself. No; it was better to take his departure now before he did anything to impair Margaret's regard.

The reasons he had given for his sudden leaving were decidedly vague; it was necessary that he should be in Washington that evening; Corliss had telegraphed; it was all very important. Phillip damned Corliss heartily and didn't hesitate to express dark suspicion. Even this morning found him still grumbling and lamenting. John could not flatter himself that he had deceived Margaret. She had expressed sincere regret upon the news of his intended departure, but she had asked no questions; she had even reprimanded Phillip when he had overstepped the bounds of politeness and had shown undue curiosity as to the contents of the telegram.

Breakfast was a dismal affair. The outside world, seen through the tall windows, was gray and chilly. Phillip was out of temper; John depressed. Of the three, Margaret alone seemed possessed of her usual good spirits, and talked brightly and cheerfully until John mentally accused her of hard-heartedness

and told himself bitterly that she was probably glad to be rid of him. He had said good-by to Mrs. Ryerson overnight and had been touched and pleased at the warmth of feeling she had shown.

"You must come back, Mr. North," she said. "I want you to feel that here at Elaine there's a room always ready and waiting for you, and a welcome from us all. I've adopted you, sir, so don't—don't let it be too long before you return."

"My dear Mrs. Ryerson," he had answered warmly, "no one could be sorrier to go than I, and no one happier to come back."

"That is a promise," she had replied, well pleased. "We shall remember it. And you'll look after Phillip, won't you? You see, I'm not altogether disinterested, am I? Good-night and good-by, Mr. North; and—I suppose you don't care to kiss old women, do you?"

"I love to kiss young women who call themselves old," John had answered.

But Mrs. Ryerson was not the only member of the household at Elaine who had fallen victim to John. Uncle Casper had learned of his departure with comical but genuine sorrow, and all through breakfast he stole about the table with gloom depicted

on his countenance. He passed every dish to John again and again, accompanying each with low-voiced advice and entreaties.

"Better have some mo' cakes, Mister No'th, sir; travelin's mighty tryin' bizness."

"'Nother aig, sir? Yo' got a long journey ahaid, sir!"

"Please, sir, let me git yo' some mo' coffee. It's pow'ful cold an' crampy out do's this mawnin'!"

Will was awaiting them with the buckboard, in which John's trunk and luggage were already piled. Margaret accompanied them to the porch, and when Phillip, who for some inexplicable reason had come out without his hat, returned inside, John seized the opportunity to bid her good-by. The smile she had worn all during breakfast left her face as he took her hand.

"I wish I were not driving you away," she said regretfully.

"But you're not; I have to go."

She shook her head. "I fear I'm as distrustful of that telegram as Phil is," she answered with a smile. "I'm sorry. We shall miss you. But you will come again, won't you? You won't let this—this mistake keep you away?"

"Do you want me to come back?" he asked with a note of hope in his voice.

"Yes," she replied evenly. "I always want my friends to come back."

"Good-by," he sighed, dropping her hand. "Here's one friend who will be mighty glad to get back. And if—— Well, good-by, Miss Ryerson. Remember your promise."

"Yes; but please, *please* don't think of that!"

"You mean don't hope anything from it? I fear I can't promise that. I was born hopeful, I guess, and it's too late now to reform. All ready, Phil. Say good-by to 'Uncle Bob' for me, Miss Ryerson; tell him I hope his gout will improve."

Phillip touched Cardinal with the lash and they sped off down the avenue into the raw, chill mist. At the last turn John looked back. Margaret and Uncle Casper were still standing under the portico, indistinct forms in the gray morning gloom.

John found George Corliss at his office that afternoon and went out to his house with him. He remained in Washington until Sunday morning and then went on to New York. David's welcome was hearty, the new automobile was tantalizing and mysterious in its actions, the holiday attractions

at the theatres were excellent, and the remaining days of recess sped rapidly.

Back at Elaine John's departure left a vacancy that was apparent for many days. Phillip moped about the house and grounds and refused to be comforted until "Uncle Bob" reminded him that the season for partridges ended with the last day of December. Then he picked up spirits, and during the next few days they shot far and wide. Margaret went back to her somewhat neglected household affairs cheerfully enough, but found to her surprise and dismay that, with John North's departure, things seemed less well worth doing.

She strove to find a reason for this, but failed. She did not love him; of that she was certain. A woman, she told herself, does not fall in love with a man on six days' acquaintance. She liked him, yes, very much; she was amazed to find how much. She liked him far better than any man she had known. She mentally compared him with these, with Nate Willis, with several quasi and would-be suitors of the town, with the wealthy gentleman breeder who came over regularly from Prentiss every week to dinner and made open love to her over the

roast; and he emerged triumphant from every comparison.

She owned to herself that John North was what she would have the man she loved: strong, gentle; capable, considerate; manly, tender and good to look upon. He was all these, and yet—no, she did not care for him in the way he would have her care for him, in the way she must care for the man whose wife she was to be. She wondered why. Perhaps, after all, in spite of her denials, if he should come again, if she were to meet him day after day—— She paused at her work and stared speculatively out of the window. Couldn't she, after all, grow to care for him? Surely, it wouldn't be impossible? Impossible! Of a sudden it seemed to her that it would be very easy, and she seized her work again and sewed hurriedly as though to change the current of her thoughts. But presently the needle was again idle. She had promised—such a promise! What had possessed her to make it! Supposing—some day—it should become incumbent upon her to keep it! She gave a little gasp of dismay.

Suddenly she had become fearful of that promise!

“Uncle Bob” left them three days after John had gone and went back to Richmond with a hamper

of birds and a surcease from gout. Phillip was preparing for his own departure, and Margaret began, in anticipation, to feel lonely.

One afternoon she was seated by the hall fireplace busy with some of Phillip's garments which she had rescued from his trunk in various states of disrepair. Uncle Casper had just put a massive oak log on the andirons, and the silence of the darkening hall was broken only by the hissing and sputtering of the flames as they attacked the damp wood. The door from the drawing-room opened suddenly and Phillip strode in.

"Margey!"

Something in his tone caused her to drop the garment in her hands and turn quickly toward him. He came into the radius of the firelight, and she saw that his face was pale and troubled. Something white fluttered in his hand. She knew then what had happened, but she only asked quietly:

"What is it, Phil, dear?"

"This," he answered. He put the letter he carried into her hand. "I want you to read it to me, Margey. There is something there I don't understand."

She held it to the light. It was, as she had feared, an old letter from George Corliss.

"You haven't read it?" she asked with sudden hope.

"Read it!" he answered. "No; it's a letter of yours or mamma's. I went to your room to find a pen; mamma said you had some. It was lying open in the little drawer of the desk and I couldn't help seeing it. I saw some words: He has learned you want to sell Elaine! What does it mean, Margey? Who is it from? I want to know!"

For an instant the idea of putting him off presented itself to her; if she lied to him he would believe her and he need not know until summer. She was silent a moment. Phillip moved impatiently, stretched forth a hand toward the letter and drew it back again, staring down at her with troubled eyes.

"Margey! What is it?"

"It's from Mr. Corliss, Phil," she answered quietly. "You are right, dear; you ought to know. Maybe we—I have done wrong in keeping it from you. Get down here beside me, Phil, and I will tell you everything."

"Everything? Why—what—Margey; it isn't true,

is it? We're not going to sell Elaine?" he cried sharply.

"Come," she answered. He sank to his knees beside her chair and she put one arm over his shoulders, drawing him to her and laying her head against his. Phillip gazed white-faced at the flames. "Don't say anything until I have finished dear," she begged.

Then she told him.

He let her finish uninterrupted. Then he removed her arm quietly and arose and walked back into the shadows toward the doorway. She remained motionless and silent, her eyes on the sputtering flames, until a tear welled over and she brushed it away. Phillip came back and stood beside her, looking not at her but into the fire.

"You ought to have told me," he said in low voice, "you ought to have told me."

Margaret kept silence.

"I had a right to know," he went on. And then, bitterly: "God! what a fool you've made me act, Margey! Squandering money up there while our home is being offered for sale to any stranger that can buy it! While you and mamma were struggling along—starving, for all I know——!"

"No, Phil!"

"And selling things out of the stable to get enough to pay my damned bills. I understand now about the harness. What—what did that money go for?"

"It was needed, Phil."

"But what for? For me? Did you send it to me?" he demanded.

"I—I don't remember now, dear. What does it matter?"

"Don't lie, please, Margey. Did you send it to me?"

"Phil! . . . Yes, dear, I did. You needed money. We had none in the house and mamma could not get any for a week or more. So—there was that old harness, Phil, and—surely, that was better than borrowing from—any one?"

"Mamma couldn't get any for a week! Then—then it was to pay—you sold the harness to get money to pay my poker debts?"

"Does it matter, dear?"

"Matter? No, I reckon not; it's of a piece with the rest of it all." He was silent a minute. Then:

"Oh, I know you did it out of kindness, Margey; I understand that; but—but you shouldn't have treated me like a child that has to be pampered

and cuddled! I ought to have known; it was my place to know!"

"But we thought—and Mr. Corliss agreed that it would be best, dear, that——"

"Corliss! What right has Corliss coming into our private affairs?"

"He was your father's best friend, dear," answered Margaret simply. "And he has been a good friend to us all, Phil. Don't you see, we didn't want your first year at college spoiled by the knowledge of your poverty. Father would not have wanted it, Phil. He hoped so much of Harvard for you. All along I have comforted myself when there have been doubts with the sure knowledge that father would have approved, Phil."

Phillip stared at the flames. Suddenly he turned almost fiercely.

"After I lost at poker, Bassett would never play again with me," he cried. "Why was that? Did he know? Did any one up there know?"

"Mr. North knew, Phil. I—I wrote and asked him to—to keep you away from cards. Phil! What else could I do? I didn't want you to know!"

Phillip turned back to the flames abruptly.

"John knew!" he muttered. "He knew! And

he told Bassett! Every one seems to have known save I that I was a beggar! They were all laughing at me behind my back, I daresay; at me, playing cards and spending money and joining clubs when my folks had to sell things to pay my bills! And so John knew; and he professed to be my friend!" He turned with clenched hands. "He should have told me, the cheat! Why didn't he tell me instead of every one else?"

"I made him promise not to, Phil. You're doing him——"

"Was that what a friend would have done? Seen me the laughing-stock of that crowd? David knew, and Chester, and Kingsford, and——!"

Betty? Had Betty known?

"I've done with him now, though," he went on fiercely. "He can go hang for all I care. Friend? A nice friend he has proved!" He faced Margaret again and took a step toward her. "Look here! I don't know what took place between you and John; and I don't ask. But drop it! Do you hear? I won't have him making love to my sister. I——"

"Phillip! Be still!"

"I mean what I say," he went on angrily, his eyes flashing. "He's a cur! He's——"

"Phil, dear, you're angry! Don't say anything more now, please! For my sake, Phil!" She went to him and put one arm around him and kissed the cheek that strove to draw away. "Wait until to-morrow, Phil, *please*."

He gulped; then he drew the hand from his shoulder and turned away.

"All right, Margey," he answered quietly. "I'm—I'm a little bit—I reckon I'll go out for awhile."

He picked his cap from the table and passed out onto the porch. Margaret took up the letter from the hearth, sighed, and then in a passion of rage tore it into bits and hurled it into the flames. Sinking into the chair, she leaned her face in her hands and sat there long, motionless, in the firelight.

After supper Phillip sought her again. The trouble was not gone from his face, but his first anger was past.

"I've been thinking it over, Margey," he said quietly. "We must make the best of it. I beg your pardon for—for the way I went on, for the things I said. It—it'll be all right, won't it?"

She smiled back at him gladly.

"Yes, Phil, it will be all right if we stick together, dear. And we will, won't we?"

"Always, Margey."

"And—and what you said, Phil, about Mr. North wasn't——"

"We'll leave him out of it, if you please, Margey," he said coldly.

Margaret sighed.

CHAPTER XX

"THE whole thing's a big swindle!" declared Chester Baker in disgust. "Here I've been watching them ever since lunch, and what has happened? Not a thing! There hasn't even been a false step!"

He turned away from the window and punched a cushion vindictively. Phillip laughed and took his place beside him, glancing upward at the source of Chester's discontent. In the upper end of the Yard a little army of men in brown jumpers, armed with pruning-shears attached to bamboo poles, were swarming over the elms, waging a war of extermination against the brown-tail moths whose nests dotted the tips of the topmost branches.

"I shouldn't want to be up there," said Phillip.

"There isn't the least danger," answered Chester. "They never fall. They walk around up there, seventy feet or more from the ground, and balance themselves on twigs and leaves and poke those poles around and have a perfectly elegant time. Why, they won't even make believe to fall or lose their

balance or anything! Well, I've simply wasted two hours, that's all."

"It's hard luck," grinned Phillip.

"Oh, I suppose you don't care," complained Chester. "You have no art in your soul. I'm disgusted. For two hours I've sat here and waited patiently to see a body come hurtling downward. But nary a hurtle! Not one corpse has dropped with a dull, sickening thud upon the snow-covered ground. Not a speck of gore decorates the landscape. I shall write to the *Crimson* about it.

"By the way, Phil, talking of gore; there's a peach of a show at the Bowdoin Square this week: 'The River Pirates.' They say it's simply lovely. There's one scene on the East River where a police launch chases the pirates, with a dandy fight; the launch blows up and a big ocean liner comes along just in the nick of time and rescues everybody. All right on the stage! It's great! I'm going in Thursday evening; want to come?"

"No; I can't, Chester."

"Got something on for Thursday? How about Saturday? I rather like Saturday nights, anyway."

"I can't afford it," answered Phillip. "Fact is, Chester, I've got to go awfully slow the rest of the

year. Things haven't turned out very well with us at home. When father died I thought he had left plenty of money, but I've found out just lately that we have practically nothing. So, you see, I'm out of theatres and such things."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Phil; I know how it is to be hard up. But, look here; come along with me; I'll treat. I'd have done it before, only I imagined you had plenty of tin. Will you?"

"I'd rather not, thanks," Phillip answered.

"Oh, come on; don't be so fussy! I'd let you pay if I was hard up!"

"No, Chester. I'm much obliged to you, but I've sworn off on theatres."

"Oh, all right. But I wish you would. By the way, I met John North yesterday. He said you'd changed your room and wanted to know if I could tell him where you were living. But I didn't know anything about it. He said he'd been looking all over for you."

"Yes; I gave up those rooms I had. They were rather high, and I found I could give them up by paying a month's rent. I'm rooming on Dewolf Street."

"Jumping Moses! Dewolf Street! Man, that's

the limit! It must be awful, isn't it? All babies and muckers and pushcarts and things like that?"

"Well, it isn't as nice as some places," answered Phillip evasively, "but it will do all right. It's good and cheap."

Chester observed him commiseratingly for a moment. Then he asked suddenly:

"Did you bring Maid back?"

"No, I left her. She's happier at home, I reckon."

"Good work! Then look here, Phil; what's the matter with coming here? I wish you would! It would only be forty dollars for the rest of the year. Would that be too much?"

"No; that's what I pay where I am; only—if I really thought you wanted me and weren't just taking pity on me, I'd like mighty well to come."

"Pity be blowed! Of-course I want you. I wish I'd known before that you were going to change."

"But I haven't any furniture," Phillip objected. "I sold about everything."

"You wouldn't need anything except a bed, and you can get that cheap any old place. Will you come?"

"Yes. You're mighty good, Chester."

"I don't see that," was the answer. "Fact is, I'm

rather lonesome. I thought when I started out it would be nice to have a place by myself. At Exeter I had a roommate, but I didn't like it. He always wanted to cut up when I had to grind, and always had to grind when I wanted to have fun. We were always scrapping."

"I'll move in on Monday if that's all right for you."

"Monday be hanged! What's the matter with to-day? We can find a bed in ten minutes and get them to send it right over."

But Phillip held out for Monday. "It will be mighty handy for my meals," he said. "I have to walk a pretty good way as it is now."

"Where are you eating? North said you'd left your table at The Inn."

"Yes, I had to. I'm eating at Randall."

Chester whistled. "Well, you are going the whole hog, aren't you? Do you like it?"

"Yes; it's just what I want. I can pay as little or as much as I wish to."

Chester grinned. "I never tried Randall," he said. "I'll go to dinner with you some time. Well, come on and let's go down to Holmes Field and watch the hockey. Your friend Kingsford's playing cover-

point on the freshman team and just tearing holes in the ice. It's beautiful to see him. I think he's smashed everything except his left leg so far. How are you coming with your exams?"

The winter term was two weeks old and the mid-years were upon them in full force. Life was very serious, and the popular subjects of conversation were seminars and flunks. Phillip was passing through the ordeal very well, while Chester, although he spoke vaguely on every possible occasion of having "a fighting chance" and of "never saying die," was forced to acknowledge to himself that the probabilities were strongly in favour of his passing with disgustingly commonplace success.

Kingsford was not among the freshman players that afternoon—Chester said he supposed he had finally killed himself—and after standing about in the snow for nearly an hour watching the 'varsity practice, the two walked back to the Union and had five o'clock tea. Phillip found a letter for him in the rack and with a frown recognized John's writing. He slipped it into his pocket and did not open it until he was in his room.

The most optimistic person could have found but one meritorious feature about that room; it was

cheap. The house was an ugly, yellow, box-like erection, which contained a never-failing odour of boiled cabbage and onions. Phillip's room was on the third floor, under the eaves, and was just large enough to accommodate the slim iron bedstead and three other articles of furniture. His trunk stood under the narrow dormer window and was spread with a saddle blanket, making, so he assured himself, an excellent imitation of a window-seat. He had kept three of his pictures, and these, with numerous photographs and his collection of whips and spurs and bits, ornamented the sloping walls. This evening as he climbed the dark stairway, entered the room and lighted the gas, it looked meaner and more squalid than ever, and the prospect of leaving it pleased him greatly. It was very cold up there, since a somewhat mythical furnace never sent its heat higher than the first floor. He lighted the little gas radiator beside the washstand and pulled up the chair until the crackling contrivance of stove-pipe was between his knees. Then he drew forth John's letter and opened it.

"DEAR PHIL" (he read)—"Where under the sun have you disappeared to? We looked for you on Sunday evening, but you didn't show up, and so I

went around to your house. There the buxom landlady professed complete ignorance of your whereabouts. You had gone; she knew nothing else, and didn't seem to care. At the post-office they coldly refused to divulge your present address; I think they mistook me for a bill collector. Your friend Baker could give me no assistance, and so I am sending this to the Union as a last desperate resort. If you ever receive it, come around to the room. If you don't appear before Saturday I shall place the affair in the hands of the police. Yours, JOHN."

Phillip sat for a moment in thought after finishing the note. Then he placed it back in the envelope and gravely and deliberately tore it across and across. For want of a waste-basket he dropped the pieces back of the washstand. Unlocking the trunk, he selected a quarter from a small horde and went to dinner.

John confidently expected Phillip at his rooms the following Sunday evening, and when ten o'clock came without him his perplexity became uneasiness.

"Maybe the boy's sick, Davy," he suggested.

David woke up from his doze and blinked.

"Sick? Phil?" he asked. "Oh, I don't believe so. He's probably tired of us middle-aged codgers

and has found more congenial places to spend his Sunday evenings. Maybe he's in love. I thought I saw symptoms of it before recess—an unnatural gaiety, a sort of feverish excitement."

"You seem to know the symptoms," laughed John. "One would almost think you'd been in love yourself at some time?"

"Once," answered David, reaching for his pipe, which had dropped to the floor, leaving a long trail of ashes over his waistcoat and trousers, "only once, John. I was twelve. It was desperate while it lasted. *She* was my teacher. I discovered that if I failed at my lessons I was kept after school and that she stayed with me. After that I never knew a thing; I developed a sudden colossal ignorance that astounded her and alarmed my parents. Day after day I sat in my seat after the others were dismissed and feasted my eyes on her from behind my geography or slate. Then—" he sighed deeply—"then the natural thing happened. Fate parted us. I was taken out of her room and relegated to the next class below, which was presided over by a young man with mutton-chop whiskers and red neckties. It was an awful blow, John."

"It must have been," John said sympathetically.

"Yes. Of course, my whole ambition then was to get back to her room again. I became the brightest scholar in the class. I astonished every one. The man with the red necktie was tickled to death and went round telling everybody about me and taking great credit to himself. In three months they put me back in her class."

He paused and sighed disconsolately.

"But she wasn't there. She had married a druggist two days before. I never saw her again."

"And your young life was blighted!"

"Forever!"

"Which being the case," said John, "let's go to bed. To-morrow I shall go in search of Phil."

"You might take a dinner bell and go around like a town crier," suggested David, "yelling 'Boy lost! Boy lost!'"

But Monday was a busy day for John and it was not until three o'clock that he was able to start out on his search. His first step was to look up Everett Kingsford. This occupied him the better part of an hour, but resulted in what apparently meant success.

"He's got a room on Dewolf Street," said Everett. "He told me the number, but I'm afraid I've for-

gotten it. However, it won't be very hard to find, I guess. If you like, I'll go along with you.

"I don't know what's come over Phil," he continued, as they began their quest. "He's left our table and he hasn't been around to see me once. I met him at the Union the other day and that's the only time I've had sight of him. He said the reason he left the table was because he couldn't afford it."

"Ah," said John. He thought he knew the solution of Phil's disappearance. Somehow, he told himself, Phil had discovered the condition of the family finances and, animated by some idiotic pride, was keeping aloof from his friends. "Just the sort of fool thing he would do," thought John.

They hadn't far to seek. The second house they stopped at was the yellow one with the boiled-cabbage aroma. The landlady, a red-haired slattern who wiped the soapsuds from her hands and arms as she opened the door, informed them somewhat crossly that Mr. Ryerson had roomed at her house, but that he had moved away that very day.

"Not an hour ago," she said. "No; I don't know where he's gone. Likely the expressman could tell you. His name's Donovan and he has a stand on the corner there beyond. All I know is the gentle-

man took my room until college ended and now he's gone and thrown it up." She closed the door behind them with angry violence.

"I can't honestly blame him," said Kingsford dryly. "The smell is enough to make one throw up anything, even a room."

The expressman was absent, and inquiries at the corner grocery failed to enlighten them as to his whereabouts or as to the time of his return. "We'll have to give up for to-day, I guess," John said. "You might ask around, Kingsford. Surely, somebody must know where he is!"

But what search failed to find, accident revealed. Phillip could not hope to avoid John forever. He knew that sometime they must meet, and, incensed as he was by what he termed the other's treachery, he dreaded the meeting. It took place that Monday evening.

In honour of his installation in the new quarters, Chester had persuaded Phillip to take dinner with him at his boarding-house. As it happened, John, at the invitation of a friend, had also been a guest at the same place. When John came downstairs after dinner he literally ran into Phillip and Chester at the front door. Phillip did not see John until the

latter had seized him by the arm and swung him around.

"Well, Phil! You're really alive?"

Phillip moved away from the other's grasp coldly and pretended not to see the outstretched hand. John stared in perplexity. Then he stepped forward and again laid a hand on the younger man's shoulder.

"Phil, what does this mean?" he asked sternly. The little group of men about the door watched curiously. Phillip found his calmness deserting him. The blood seethed into his cheeks and his eyes blazed. He tore his arm from John's hand and swept it around in something between a blow and a shove that sent the other reeling against the newel post.

"Take your hands off me, North!" he cried angrily, shrilly. Chester sprang between and pushed Phillip toward the door. John grew very white. His perplexity remained, but was swallowed up in a sudden flood of intense anger at the indignity put upon him. He strode forward, his eyes darkening, his hands clenched at his side. He had no thought of returning Phillip's blow, if blow it was; he wanted to take the other by the collar and shake him until

his teeth rattled. He found himself confronted by Chester Baker, white and determined.

"You be careful, North!" he said defiantly. Phillip strove to push by him.

"This is my affair, Chester," he cried. But John paused and contemptuously thrust his hands into his pockets.

"I beg your pardon," he said coldly. "I mistook you for a friend."

"It was the biggest mistake you could have made," replied Phillip, his voice a-tremble. Then Chester pushed him before him out the door.

The episode caused talk. A half-dozen men had witnessed it, and by the next afternoon various accounts of it had reached John's friends and acquaintances, and it was being generally discussed, for John was a public character whose affairs interested the entire university. It became known that he had been Phillip's guest during the holidays, and various and wonderful were the theories evolved to account for the quarrel. Phillip gained not a little notoriety; he was pointed out as "the fellow who slugged John North"; but beyond his small circle of personal friends, who, despite that he had vouchsafed to them no explanation of the affair, stood by

him loyally, he was looked upon with disfavour and voted "darned fresh."

John spoke of the affair to none save David. The latter heard of it with mingled dismay and delight, and when John had finished surprised him by the decision he rendered.

"Don't take any more notice of him," he said. "I don't know any more than you what the boy's got against you, but you may depend that it's something he considers serious. Phil's honest, John, whatever else he is. I suppose it's all some silly misunderstanding, but it's quite evident that Phil takes it very much in earnest. I suppose nothing happened down in Virginia that he could have taken exception to? Nothing about his sister, eh?"

"What do you mean by that?" demanded John angrily.

"I mean," answered David undisturbedly, "that there was nothing—look here, to be plain, did you get into any flirtation down there? Did you do anything that Phil might construe into a slight against his sister?"

"If you don't shut up I'll smash you," John threatened.

"By which I presume you mean me to understand

that there was nothing of the sort? Well, the next question is, does Phil *think* there was anything?"

John's wrath gave way to thoughtfulness. Finally he said:

"I can't see how he could, Davy, honestly. There was not a thing—— Look here, Davy, I asked his sister to marry me and she refused. There was nothing wrong with that, was there?"

"Nothing, I should say, except her decision," answered David. "I'm sorry she turned you down, old man, if you really care for the girl. But, to tell the truth, it seems to me you're rather fortunate not to marry into such a fire-eating family. I suppose the girl couldn't have told Phil any yarns that—er——"

"David!"

"Oh, well, I don't know her, of course. Women are damned strange, though, just the same. I've got two sisters of my own, if you remember." He smoked in silence awhile and John sat scowling crossly at him through the smoke. Then, "Well, I give it up, Johnnie. Let him alone; maybe he'll have the grace to apologize and explain things."

"He may apologize until he's blue in the face,"

said John wrathfully, "for all I care. But I would like to know what in thunder it all means!"

David shook his head sadly.

"Children are contrary and exasperating things," he said, "and the guardian's lot is not all roses."

CHAPTER XXI

"WHAT has become of that nice young Mr. Ryerson, Everett?" asked Mrs. Kingsford. "We haven't seen him since—why, not since before Christmas. have we, Betty?"

"No, mother," answered Betty calmly.

"Phillip Ryerson has taken the veil," replied Everett gravely.

"Taken the veil!" echoed his mother. "What do you mean? Whose veil, Everett?"

"I mean he has withdrawn from the world of society and is hiding himself in the monastic seclusion of Thayer Hall. Really, I don't quite know what's up with Phil, but he's frightfully down on his luck for some old reason, and I never see him more than once in a coon's age. I think, though, that his folks have lost their money, or something like that has happened. He left our table right after the holidays and went to eating at Randall. And he gave up a couple of very jolly rooms he had on Mount Auburn Street and went to a horrible cheap dive down near

the river. Since then, however, he's gone in with a fellow named Baker who has a joint in Thayer. I've tried to get him to come here to dinner with me a couple of times, but he seems soured on polite society. I daresay Betty has thrown him over."

"Who's that you're speaking of?" asked Mr. Kingsford, looking up from his *Transcript*. "That young Ryerson?"

"Yes, sir," Everett replied.

"Well, if his people have lost their money I guess he thinks society is too expensive for him. I'm glad he's got so much sense. I always thought he seemed level-headed. I wish you were as much so, sir." Everett grinned.

"But," continued Mr. Kingsford, glancing up and down the market columns, "it won't do for him to think we are snobbish. And besides, I won't have him breaking Betty's heart. You tell him from me that I want him to come in to dinner next week."

"You're very nice, papa," said Betty sweetly, "but my heart's not nearly so fragile as you seem to think."

"Glad to hear it; must be like your mother's. She broke mine fifty times before she finally consented

to marry me, and I don't believe she ever sustained a fracture herself."

"Poor old dad," murmured Betty.

"Betty, you're getting into a most annoying habit of referring to me as aged," said Mr. Kingsford, scowling blackly. "I want you to understand, miss, that I am only six years older than your mother and she's the youngest woman in Boston."

Mrs. Kingsford smiled and blushed, as she always did at her husband's compliments, and arose in response to the appearance at the library door of the maid with wraps.

"Come, Betty, the carriage is here," she said. Everett accompanied them downstairs and saw them into the brougham. When he returned to the library he found his father had thrown aside the paper and was thoughtfully watching the smoke curl up from the tip of his cigar.

"Think that's right about young Ryerson, do you, Everett?"

"About his folks losing money? Yes, sir; I gathered as much from what he has told me."

"Sorry to hear it. He seems a fine sort of a boy. Do you like him?"

"Yes, sir, I like Phil," answered Everett decisively.

"All right. Why is it you see so little of him then?"

"Well, we don't meet very often, sir, and he seems rather stand-offish; doesn't appear to want to chum."

"Of course he doesn't. He's a Southerner. I've met a good many of them. They're as proud as turkey cocks. If his people have lost their money, why, he has got it into his head, I daresay, that you don't care to know him. Now don't let him think that, Everett. If there's anything on God's green earth I hate it's that sort of thing. Don't be a money-snob, my boy."

"I don't think I am, sir. It hadn't occurred to me that Phil could imagine anything of the sort."

"I don't say that you are, Everett; but don't let it look that way. Now you look him up when you go back Monday and don't let him put you off; give him to understand that it doesn't make a continental bit of difference to you whether there's been an auction at the old homestead or not. Get him in here to dinner with you. If he's down on his luck, cheer him up. Take him into Parker's some evening and put some cocktails where they'll do the most good; you may charge it to me."

"All right, sir. But I don't believe he'd go to

dinner, sir; he's awfully shy on letting you do things for him."

"Is, eh? A regular dyed-in-the-wool Southerner, I guess. Well, you do the best you can, Everett. There have been four generations of Kingsfords at Harvard so far, and they've all acted like gentlemen. You look sharp, sir, and see that the rule isn't broken. I'll forgive you anything and pay your bills like a little tin bank, just so long as you don't forget what your last name is. If you ever do that, look out for squalls, my son!"

The result of this conversation, which took place the first week in February, was that Everett became a frequent visitor at the corner room in Thayer. Phillip begged off from Everett's invitation to dinner, not because, now that he had discovered that he was still wanted, he did not wish to go, but because he had sold his very expensive dress suit for half what he had paid for it, and it did not occur to him to borrow one. He didn't explain this to Everett, however, but pleaded study, an excuse which his friend accepted politely but did not believe in. Perhaps Everett suspected the true reason, for a few days later he asked Phillip to come to his rooms on a certain Thursday afternoon.

“My mother and Betty and Miss Wayland are coming out to tea,” he explained, “and going to vespers afterward. I’ll let you off on vespers if you insist, but I would like you to help me hand the sandwiches around. Porter is trying for the nine and has got to be in the cage that afternoon with the rest of the animals.” (Porter was Everett’s roommate.) “Say you’ll come, like a good chap.”

“I’ll be mighty glad to,” answered Phillip. “Only—you don’t reckon your—mother thinks I’m impolite for not accepting that invitation to dinner?”

“Not a bit. I explained that you were awfully busy grinding. She’s been holding you up to me ever since as a model of studiousness. If I don’t think to speak of it again, be there about three, will you?”

That Thursday was almost a week distant. The intervening days went slower than any Phillip had ever known. He had his best suit of clothes pressed and bought a new tie. The latter was broad and black, with half-moons of purple and green. Chester pretended great concern.

“Tell me the truth, Phil,” he begged. “You’re going to get married, aren’t you? You’re not? Then you’re asked to dinner with Prexy. I knew

it was something momentous—out of the ordinary! Couldn't you get me in somehow? My table manners, really, aren't half bad, if we don't have soup. I always spill my soup. Anyhow, I could say I didn't care for soup; lots of folks don't, you know. Of course, I haven't any tie that comes anywhere near touching that one; but I've got a Punjaub thing, all red and yellow and green, that's very, very effective by gaslight. You will take me, won't you, Phil?"

Meanwhile something occurred that disturbed Phillip's self-satisfaction. Crossing the Yard one morning, he encountered David lounging along, swinging a note-book and whistling very much out of tune. When he saw Phillip he hailed him and, crossing the grass with gigantic strides and leaps, shook hands.

"Haven't seen you for a good while, Phil," he said.

"No; I—I've been rather busy since I got back," Phillip answered confusedly.

"Have you, boy? Look here, Phil, it's none of my business—in a way—but I want to tell you that you're making a big mistake. John has told me, you know. Now, whatever it is you've got against him, I'll bet you dollars to pants buttons there's nothing

in it. He swears he doesn't know what it is, and John doesn't lie, Phil. He doesn't know I'm saying this; he'd try to break my neck if he found it out. But you've hurt him quite a bit. If you're in the right of it—why, there's nothing more to be said. But if you're making a mistake I think you'd better own up."

"I don't think there's any mistake," Phillip answered gravely.

"Think be damned! You've got to know, Phil! If you're in the wrong it's your duty, my boy, to say so, and if he's in the wrong it's equally your duty to tell him where. Now you think it over, will you? And, look here, Phil, supposing you come around some Sunday night—to-morrow, for instance—just to see me? You've got nothing against me, have you? Well, you come and call on me, then; it's none of John's business if you do, you know. Anyhow, think it over well, will you?"

Phillip could do no less than promise.

But what David had said impressed him. He had hitherto believed himself altogether in the right. Now he began to wonder whether, after all, he did not owe it to John to explain what he was charged with. Not that there could be any mistake. He

had spoken with Guy Bassett and Bassett had readily acknowledged that John had seen him and asked him to refrain from playing poker with Phillip. But, declared Bassett, it had ended there; he had not mentioned the matter to any one else. Phillip was glad of that, but it did not, he told himself, mitigate John's offense. John had treated him like an irresponsible child—had deceived him, had made him an object of amusement, perhaps ridicule, to Bassett at least; probably to David as well. Phillip could not forgive him that.

It was quite conceivable that John did not guess what he held against him; he probably did not for a moment suspect that Phillip had found him out. And so perhaps David was right and it was Phillip's duty to acquaint John with the cause of the estrangement. But he would not call on David. He would write John a note. Yet, when it came down to doing so, when the paper was before him and the pen in his hand, the task proved too difficult; he was not a ready writer, and after several attempts he put it off. The result was that the note was never written.

On Thursday Phillip went to Everett's room in Beck with his heart thumping madly under his new

Ascot tie. The thought of meeting Betty again was as delicious as it was disquieting. How could he explain his apparent indifference to her existence during the past six weeks? Would she forgive him? He was forced to acknowledge that he had given her excellent reasons for not doing so.

When he reached Everett's door sounds from within told him that the visitors had already arrived. When he entered he found them roaming about the study, examining the pictures, reading the shingles, peeping curiously among the litter on the mantel, and all the while deftly preening themselves, smoothing their dresses, touching their hair with little surreptitious glances into mirrors, and asking many questions and paying little heed to answers. It is scarcely fair, perhaps, to associate Mrs. Kingsford with the mild hurly-burly. She did her sightseeing very quietly. Phillip shook hands with her first and made his apologies for declining her invitation to dinner. He found her very gracious and forgiving.

"No, no, don't apologize," she replied. "Everett has explained. Study before social diversions, Mr. Ryerson, is, I am sure, a very good rule. But you will come in to see us soon, won't you? We shall be happy to see you any time, and—we dine

at half past seven. Don't wait for Everett to invite you, but come whenever you can."

Phillip muttered his thanks, feeling rather ashamed of himself for allowing her to credit him with such ideal devotion to study, and turned to the two girls. Betty was smiling across at him brightly, but it was a smile that he didn't altogether like.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said as she gave him her hand. "I've always had a devouring curiosity to look upon a real, genuine grind."

"Grind?" he asked uncomfortably.

"Yes; one who burns the midnight oil, and wears wet towels around his head, and heroically resists all such attractions as dinners in order that he may stay locked up in his room studying hard. You're very interesting, Mr. Ryerson."

Phillip smiled unenjoyably and was glad for once to turn away from Betty. He shook hands with Miss Wayland, a pronounced and rather regal blonde, and exchanged a few words of banter with Everett. Then he glanced irresolutely toward Mrs. Kingsford and from her to Betty. Betty had perched herself on the window-seat and was temptingly accessible. Phillip took his courage in hand and dropped down beside her.

"Betty!"

Betty's eyebrows arched in surprise

"What did you call me?"

"Betty," he faltered.

"Don't you think it would be nicer to say Miss Kingsford?"

"No, I don't," he replied doggedly.

"I do; much nicer." Betty hummed a tune.

"Betty," he pleaded, "don't be mean. It—I—I want to explain, please."

"Explain what?" asked Betty, with a great show of interest.

"Why I haven't been to see you."

"Why, you were studying very hard, of course."

"I wasn't. I mean, that isn't the reason."

"Oh!" Betty's face fell. "Now you've gone and spoiled it all! You're not a grind, after all? And to think of all the sympathy and admiration I've wasted on you! Really, you're very disappointing!"

"Betty, please be serious," Phillip begged.

"Serious? Very well, I'll try." She drew the corners of her mouth down and frowned intensely. Phillip sighed. "How long must I stay like this?" she asked. "It's—it's awfully puckery!"

"I—I got your picture," said Phillip softly. "Thank you, Betty."

"Picture?" Betty's frown increased. "Picture? Oh, yes, of course. Gracious! I'd forgotten," she fibbed. "I sent away so many of those old things Christmas! Did you like it?"

"Yes," he answered miserably. Then, "Who did—how many did you give away?" he asked.

"How many? Oh, heaps; I can't begin to remember. I always send photographs Christmas; it's such a nice, easy way to give presents, isn't it? I always think they're lots nicer and more intimate than Christmas cards."

"I don't believe it," he muttered doubtfully.

"What, that they're nicer than cards? Oh, well, every one to his taste. Next time I'll send you a card: one with a lovely little landscape all frosted over with that glittery stuff, and a nice little verse in the corner. I'm glad you told me; I like to know what people want, don't you?"

"I didn't mean that; you know I didn't. Don't you want me to tell you why I—why I haven't been in to see you?"

"No." Betty shook her head smilingly. "No, not the least bit in the world, Mr. Ryerson."

"It used to be Phillip," he accused, "before I went away."

"You don't mean—!" She paused in simulated dismay and horror—"you don't mean that I *called* you that!"

"You know you did!"

"Not really? But there, I daresay I did. I'm always doing something awful unladylike and irreverent! But you'll pardon me, won't you?"

Phillip groaned and jumped up in exasperation. Betty's eyes grew large with polite surprise. "You're not well?" she exclaimed feelingly. Phillip looked down at her wrathfully.

"I'm afraid you're studying too hard," she said, shaking her head dubiously. "You mustn't overdo it, you know."

Thus ended a most unsatisfactory conversation, for Everett summoned Betty to make tea and Mrs. Kingsford took possession of Phillip. She found him in a most gloomy state of mind, and set herself to cheering him up with such good results that when they began the consumption of sandwiches and tea and cakes he was chatting quite volubly of his vacation and telling about Virginia. Betty, sitting across the study with Miss Wayland and Everett,

observed Phillip's cheerfulness and frowned. Once, during a lull in the conversation beside her, she heard Phillip exclaim warmly:

"Her name's Ruby, Mrs. Kingsford, and she's as pretty as a picture! She's rather light, but has a mighty good colour; and she's one of the graceful, trim sort, you know, with little bits of feet and slender ankles. I wish you could see her when——"

Then Everett spoke and the rest was lost to her; strain her ears as she might, she could not distinguish Phillip's words; but she saw with keen displeasure that his eyes were sparkling with enthusiasm. Unappeased curiosity marred the rest of the afternoon for Betty. She wondered who Ruby could be. Some girl in Virginia, she supposed; and yet Virginians weren't usually light, even if they were "of the graceful, trim sort." As for those "little bits of feet and slender ankles——" Betty bit her lip and, thrusting her foot out from under her skirts, viewed it with dissatisfaction. The ankle was slender enough, she thought, but the heavy, broad-soled patent-leather Oxford made her foot look simply enormous. Not that it mattered, of course, only—"Slender ankles" indeed! She wished—oh, she did wish she had that photograph she had sent to

Phillip! She would like to tear it to bits and throw it in his face?

Phillip walked to the chapel beside Mrs. Kingsford. He was resolved to prove to Betty that he was indifferent to her treatment; that if she thought she could amuse herself with impunity at his expense she was greatly, oh, very greatly, mistaken. Everett piloted them to the front row of the balcony, and when they were seated Phillip found himself between Mrs. Kingsford and Betty. He confined his attentions to the former, indicating the college celebrities as they entered, and telling her of Guy Bassett and how he attended chapel every morning because it gave him just the right length of walk. Mrs. Kingsford shook her head over that, but smiled nevertheless.

"But he doesn't really mean it, you know," Phillip hastened to explain. "That's just his way of talking."

Once he found the hymn and proffered the book to Betty.

"Thank you," she said coldly; "I never sing."

During service she sat very straight and still, looking calmly across the warm, cheerful little chapel, while Phillip, leaning back with folded arms,

viewed her surreptitiously and found his resentment melting under a glow of feeling that set his heart aleap. When, presently, a little freckled-faced cherub in the choir-loft arose and filled the chapel with wondrous melody, Phillip's heart not only leaped, but it seemed to swell until it pained him. He leaned toward Betty.

"Betty!" he whispered intensely, "Betty, I love you, dear!"

She turned from watching the angel-voiced singer and frowned upon him annoyedly.

"Please be still," she said impatiently.

Phillip's heart ceased leaping. It subsided with something that was very much like what Chester would have called a dull thud. He retired hurt and angry and made solemn vows never again to risk rebuff. Afterward they crossed the Yard in a tiny snow-squall to the square and stood for a minute under the shelter before the waiting-room. Betty turned to Phillip with a little flush in each cheek and her eyes asparkle with anger.

"I want you to give me back that photograph," she said in a low voice. Phillip's own cheeks reddened.

"Certainly," he answered. "I have no wish to

keep it. There are too many like it in—in circulation.”

Betty glared, almost speechless.

“I shall be at home to-morrow afternoon,” she said finally with superb dignity. “If your *studies* will allow, please bring it then.”

Phillip bowed. The car clanged its way up to the waiting-room and they scuttled for it. Phillip politely offered to help Betty up the steps. Betty looked the other way and leaped up them unassisted. Phillip caught a bewildering gleam of white skirts and patent-leather Oxfords. Then he and Everett were left standing bareheaded in the falling flakes.

“Subway-to-Park-Street,” shouted the starter hoarsely.

Everett dragged Phillip from the path of a trundling car. “Come on,” he said. “Let’s go and get some red-hot chocolate. It will warm us up.”

“Yes,” echoed Phillip vaguely, “it will warm us up.” He followed the other through the crowd, dazed, miserable, and only came to a partial recovery of his faculties when he had fallen over a suit case and sent a harmless gentleman in a clerical garb staggering to the wall.

“Mamma,” asked Betty that evening, when they

were alone, "what were you and Mr. Ryerson talking about so eagerly this afternoon?"

"Talking about?" repeated her mother. "Oh, he was telling me about his home in Virginia, dear."

"Was that it?" asked Betty, stifling a yawn. "I didn't know. I heard him saying something about somebody's ankles—somebody named Ruby—and it didn't sound quite proper."

"Ankles? Ruby?" mused Mrs. Kingsford, striving to recollect. "Oh, yes; that was his horse, Betty. He calls her Ruby. He seems very fond of horses and dogs and animals, don't you think?"

"Very," answered Betty, her face suddenly arrayed in smiles. "But—what a funny name for a horse!" She laughed softly, and, placing her arm about her mother's waist, gave a disconcerting hug. "Don't you think that is a funny name for a horse, mamma?"

Mrs. Kingsford suddenly understood.

"Very," she answered, smiling discreetly into her mirror.

CHAPTER XXII

JOHN'S days were very full, and the estrangement with Phillip troubled him less than it would have had he had more time to give it thought. To David it seemed that John had put the matter entirely from his mind; he never mentioned Phillip any more, and David's infrequent allusions to that youth were patently unwelcome. Yet John was not so indifferent as he appeared. Recollection of the incident at the boarding-house made his cheeks burn and his fists clench. Yet his real sentiment toward Phillip was one of irritation rather than anger. Could he have taken Phillip by the collar and shaken an explanation out of him he would have been quite satisfied and willing to clasp hands. His liking for the other remained, but was for the while drowned by the exasperation he felt.

He missed Phillip's companionship for more reasons than one, of which not the least was that without it he seemed entirely cut off from Elaine and Margaret. Several times the temptation to

write to Margaret became almost irresistible. He did not yield to it, however, for it seemed to him that the agreement between them tacitly forbade it. His only intelligence of Elaine reached him through Corliss, from whom he received several letters during the winter term. But the news was scanty and unsatisfactory. Mrs. Ryerson's health, Corliss wrote once, was causing uneasiness; she did not leave her room any more, and while she might live for a year or even two, she was practically helpless. John was glad to learn by a subsequent letter from the same source that Markham had moved over to Elaine. The overseer was a man after John's heart, and the knowledge that he was at Margaret's side comforted him. John wondered if Phillip was aware of his mother's condition, and lost sight of some of his animosity in the sympathy he felt for him.

But Phillip knew less than John. Margaret had written that their mother was not so well and that she stayed in her room most of the time, but news was conveyed in such a way as to cause Phillip little alarm. This had been at Mrs. Ryerson's own request. There was nothing to gain, she declared, by worrying

Phil. And Margaret, realizing the truth of this, concurred.

In all of her letters to Phillip Margaret pleaded with him to resume his friendship with John. The fault, she declared again and again, was all hers. John North had only done what she had asked him to, and Phillip was only hurting her, since she blamed herself for the unfortunate affair. She knew nothing of the meeting between John and Phillip, for the latter had made no mention of it in his letters home. She only knew that Phillip had left Elaine resolute to have nothing further to do with John, and that since then he had never mentioned his name. At first Phillip had answered her argument with others, but later he gave them no heed.

Margaret in those days wondered miserably what John thought of her. Whether he knew the cause of Phillip's anger; and if he did, whether he believed she was keeping silent and selfishly leaving him to shoulder the entire blame.

At four o'clock on the afternoon succeeding Everett's tea Phillip climbed the Kingsford's steps and rang the bell. It had been snowing all night and all day, and the big drawing-room was dark and depressing, a condition that chimed admirably with

Phillip's mood. After the maid left him he sat a long, long while in front of a smouldering fire of cannel-coal and strove to think of all the grand and dignified and utterly mean remarks that had occurred to him the night before. But, for some reason, his wrath had burned out and he only felt sorrowful and depressed and lonely. When Betty appeared, he told himself dejectedly, he would give her the photograph, say farewell and go away forever. He looked out through the great high windows into the whirling storm and thought what an ideal day it was on which to go away forever! Then it occurred to him suddenly that "forever" was a most dispiriting word and that he was very miserable.

Upstairs in her room, Betty, who since three o'clock had been anxiously watching for Phillip from her front window, was now impatiently watching the hands of the little Dresden clock on the mantel. She had made up her mind that Phillip should wait half an hour. She thought the suspense would have a salutary effect on his temper, and it was a subdued and chastened Phillip that she wanted to confront, and not the rather dangerous-looking Phillip she had parted from in Harvard Square the day before. She had made up her mind to keep

him waiting thirty minutes. But it had not occurred to her that she would also keep herself waiting, and now thirty minutes seemed a terribly long time. When ten minutes had dragged past she agreed on a compromise; twenty-five minutes would do quite as well as thirty. Five minutes later she compromised again; twenty minutes was really all that was necessary. Then she looked herself over very carefully in the long mirror and descended the stairs, entering the drawing-room just seventeen minutes after Phillip's arrival.

"How do you do?" she asked brightly, smilingly. "Isn't this storm awful?"

Phillip, who had risen to meet her with his countenance properly severe, was so astounded at this change of front that the effectiveness of his expression was somewhat marred. He bowed and muttered incoherently. Betty sank into a chair some ten feet away and arranged her skirts to her pleasure before she continued the conversation.

"Did you have trouble getting into town?" she asked.

"No—yes, I believe so," Phillip replied vaguely. He was still standing. Now he placed a hand within his coat and drew forth a package.

"Here is the picture," he announced somberly.

"The picture?" said Betty. "Oh, thank you. Won't you sit down?"

Phillip stared. Betty continued to smile with bright and amiable politeness. Phillip sat down. As she had made no move toward taking the photograph, he laid it irresolutely on a table at his elbow and then stared at his shoes with such apparent interest that Betty was moved to silent laughter.

"It is still snowing, I think," she said. As she sat with her back to the windows her uncertainty may have been excusable. Phillip looked out into the blinding storm and answered gravely in the affirmative. He had an uncomfortable feeling that Betty was secretly laughing at him, and his anger, which had died overnight, began to show signs of returning animation. He arose and secured the top button of his coat to the second buttonhole.

"I will say good-evening," he announced.

"But it's only afternoon!" exclaimed Betty, just as though she had not a dozen times before corrected Phillip for that Southernism.

"Good-afternoon," he amended with much dignity.

"Oh," said Betty, "must you go so soon? Then

you are not going to tell me, after all!" she added regretfully. Phillip struggled for a moment with curiosity. Then he yielded.

"Tell you what?"

"What you were going to tell me yesterday. I believe you've forgotten!"

"No, but—but——"

"Then you'll tell me?" she asked eagerly. Phillip glanced behind him. The chair was still there. He sat down.

"If you want to know," he muttered.

"Of course I do. I want to know why you have not been in to see us for so long."

"Is—has it seemed long?" he asked hopefully. Betty nodded earnestly.

"Weeks!"

"It's been two months!" he protested.

"Really? How times flies, doesn't it?" said Betty, wonderingly. Phillip wished he had resisted temptation; the storm looked so much kinder than Betty.

"It hasn't fly—flown for me," he muttered.

"But then you've had examinations," said Betty sympathetically. "I'm sure they must be dreadfully slow things."

"Yes." There followed silence.

"Well?" prompted Betty. "I'm waiting, you know."

"I don't think——" he began. Then his anger stirred once more and he faced her accusingly. "You don't want to know," he charged. "You—you're just making fun of me! You're laughing at me all the time! You're—you're cruel!"

"Phil!"

His anger died instantly. His face lighted.

"I beg your pardon, Betty, but—but—I don't know what to think!"

"Think of what you are going to tell me," advised Betty. "I don't believe you have any excuse, after all; you're simply trying to gain time to invent one."

"I'm not, Betty! Only—somehow, it doesn't seem a very good excuse when it comes to explaining," faltered Phillip. "And I daresay you'll be frightfully bored." Betty shook her head. "You won't? Well——"

So he told her the whole story just as we know it, dear, long-suffering reader, and she listened very attentively and looked bewitchingly sympathetic with the firelight on her face; and Phillip warmed to

his narrative and did it full justice. Yet when he had finished Betty's face became terribly severe.

"And pray what right," she demanded, "had you to think we wouldn't make you just as welcome even if you were poor? A fine opinion you must have formed of us! When, I should like to know, has any of us given you the right to—to think such things about us?"

"Never," he replied earnestly. "I was all wrong, Betty; I see that now. But, don't you see, Betty, at first—I didn't know! It was so sudden and unexpected. I'd never been poor before. It was so kind of strange; and some people *do* care, you know!"

"They're not nice people, then," answered Betty stoutly. "Anyhow, you might have known that I—— And after I had sent you that photograph, Phil!"

"I'm mighty sorry, Betty," he said contritely. "I won't do it again—ever!"

"I should hope not!" After a silence she said: "I'm sorry you didn't like it—the photograph, I mean."

"Like it! I did like it, Betty! I—I worshiped it!"

"Oh!"

"I—I carried it in my pocket for days and days!"

"Then I don't see why—you want to bring it back."

Phillip gasped and stared in amazement.

"I don't!" he finally ejaculated.

"Oh!" said Betty again.

"You told me to!" he cried. Betty looked scornful.

"What if I did? I didn't suppose you were going to do it!"

"Betty!"

"It only shows that you don't want to keep it!"

"But—Betty——"

"And you said that there were too many in circulation!"

"Well—and there are, too!"

"They're not!"

"There are!" he repeated doggedly.

"Only—one!"

"One! You said—you said——" Betty nodded unembarrassedly.

"Yes; but that was just—just because you'd been mean to me."

"Then they're not, Betty? You didn't send them all round everywhere at Christmas?"

"I sent only one," answered Betty, "and that one to a—a person who doesn't care for it. And I had it taken specially, and went to whole heaps of bother, and there were seven negatives, and I sat three times and—and it was all wasted!" Betty's voice was vibrant with grief. "Please, will you hand it to me?" she asked with a supreme effort to be brave. She looked over the table; the package was gone. Phillip's fingers were tremblingly buttoning up his coat.

"No," answered he; "I won't, Betty!" He had covered the intervening space and was kneeling at her side, her hands grasped tightly. "It's mine; I'm going to keep it forever! And, oh, Betty, you do care, don't you?"

"Please——" whispered Betty in dismay.

"And you don't mind if I'm poor? And you'll marry me, Betty?"

He was covering her hands with kisses.

"I'm going to study very hard, dear," he went on breathlessly, exultantly. "And I'll make money—lots of it—somehow, you know! You will marry me, Betty? Dear, darling Betty!"

"Perhaps—some day," murmured Betty.

"Betty! And—Betty, dear!—please say that you love me!"

But Betty jumped from the chair before he could stop her and turned to him with very crimson cheeks and shining eyes.

"Phil," she said, "will you do what I ask you?"

"Anything!" He strove to reach her, but she kept the chair between.

"Very well," she answered. "Sit here." She pointed imperiously to the chair and laughed nervously.

"But——"

"Oh, very well, then!"

Phillip tumbled into the seat.

"Now," continued Betty, "you must promise to do as I say."

"Yes, Betty dear," he murmured, reaching vainly for her hand. She took up her place behind him, leaning over the chair-back.

"You must close your eyes and—and no matter what happens you mustn't open them until I say you may. Will you promise?"

"Y-yes," answered Phillip. He closed his eyes.

"Now fold your hands." He obeyed with a sigh.

"Are your eyes closed?"

"Yes."

"Tight?"

"Tight!"

"Well——" She looked about her. The room was dim save for the gleam of the little flames, and silent save for the beating of her heart and Phillip's. Outside the windows the snow was banked high and the swirling flakes still fell with a queer little subdued rustle against the panes. She leaned over the chair and put her head close to his.

"Phil!"

"Yes, Betty?"

"I'm sorry I was mean," she whispered. Then, "Remember your hands!"

He refolded them with a sigh.

"Are your eyes closed tight, Phil?"

"Yes."

"Honest?"

"Honest!"

"Phil!"

"Yes, Betty—*dear* Betty!"

"I do love you, Phil! Oh, your eyes, Phil!"

"Betty, I can't——"

"You promised," she whispered.

"Oh!" he groaned.

"Are they closed now?"

"Yes, Betty."

"Very, very tight? Tighter than ever?"

"Yes; awfully tight, Betty!"

"Well——!" She gathered her skirts together in one hand and measured the distance to the door. Then Phillip, his eyes "very, very tight; tighter than ever," felt a warm breath on his cheek, inhaled a faint odour of violets, and then—and then felt lips trembling against his own, lightly, fleetingly, as though the cool, moist, fragrant petals of a rose had been drawn across his mouth.

For one delicious, awe-filled moment he sat silent, blind, and his heart ceased beating. Then promises were all forgotten. He opened his eyes. He sprang to his feet with outstretched arms.

"Betty!" he cried.

Betty had flown.

He stared in bewilderment, then dashed to the door. In the darkness at the top of the broad stairs he thought he caught the disappearing flutter of a white skirt.

"Betty!" he cried imploringly.

There was a moment of silence. Then from above him came a low whisper:

"Good-night, Phil!"

"Betty! Come down!"

"Good-night!" said the whisper.

"Betty! I'm coming up!"

The whisper was alarmed.

"If you dare!" it protested.

Phillip stood irresolute, one foot on the first step of the stairway that led to Heaven.

"You mustn't, Phil," repeated the whisper.

"Good-night!"

"Betty!" he cried again.

"Good-night!" Angels, it seems, are not always merciful.

"Well, then when, Betty?"

"Sunday?" asked the whisper.

"Oh!" he protested. "Two days!"

"Good-night, Phil!"

He sighed deeply.

"Good-night, Betty."

Then,

"Betty!"

"Yes?"

"I love you, Betty!"

There was silence in Heaven for a moment. Then a railing creaked, and,

“Phil!”

“What, Betty?”

“I’m throwing you one!”

“Betty!”

“Good-night, Phil!”

“Good-night, Betty! God bless you, dear, *dear* Betty!”

Outside on the steps a snowflake settled softly on Phillip’s mouth. He gasped and plunged exultantly into the storm.

It was glorious weather!

CHAPTER XXIII

It is sometimes rather interesting, if quite profitless, to study the genealogy of an event, tracing its descent back from one cause to another until we have found, for example, that the failure of the grocer to bring a can of baking powder on Thursday afternoon is responsible for the loss to us of \$500 on Friday morning, tracing the descent in this case through a late breakfast, a missed train, a street-car blockade and a tardy arrival at our office. Of course we have not here exhausted the possibilities of this process, for we might easily go further back and show that the forgetfulness of the grocer was due to mental commotion brought about by the extreme illness of his six-months' old son and heir, produced, in turn, by the administration of laudanum in mistake for ipecac by his mother. In fact, the possibilities only end with the original protoplasm; which really simplifies matters a great deal to the student of this line of research, since it is only necessary to say "I lost \$500 because of the

original protoplasm; deuce take the protoplasm!" and give no attention to the intermediate events.

But all this is entirely beside the story, and was only suggested by the ease with which it is possible to trace the lineage of the event which forms a conclusion of this tale. For it is quite apparent that had Sir Henry Irving not played an engagement at the Hollis Street Theatre in March of that year the final chapter of this story would have been quite different from what it is. Hence, if the reader finds fault with the conclusion—and I admit that it might be better—he may censure Sir Henry—unless he prefers to go back to the original protoplasm. I, as a mere chronicler, disclaim all blame.

Betty wanted to see Irving in "King Charles I." Phillip, animated by his desire to please Betty, invited her and Mrs. Kingsford. Betty at first refused to allow him to indulge in such expensive things as Irving seats, but after much entreaty moderated the harshness of her decree. They would go if Phillip would get seats in the balcony; the balcony was good enough; one could see and hear beautifully. The prospect of sitting for three hours at Betty's side raised Phillip to the seventh heaven of delight, and the thought of expending six dollars

for that privilege failed to discompose him. This was largely due to a letter received a day or two before from Margaret. With the letter came a check for a hundred dollars.

"Mr. Corliss has sold an option on Eliane for \$500," she wrote. "He does not say who the parties are, but seems almost certain that they will purchase in the spring. The option runs until June 1st, and may be extended. I do hope the sale will go through, Phil. Now that we know it must be, the sooner it's over with the better, don't you think so? Mamma wants you to have the money so that you can come home for your spring vacation. She will be very disappointed if you don't, so try and arrange it."

And further on:

"Won't you please answer my questions about Mr. North? Have you seen him? Are you friends again, Phil, dear? Don't let it go on any longer, *please, please*. What can he think of us, Phil? He must believe that I have allowed you to think it all his fault. Please write about it, dear. It isn't like you to let me worry about anything like this and not try to help me."

Phillip, moved by this last appeal, answered her

questions. "I am going to give him an opportunity to explain," he wrote. "If he cares to do that and shows himself decently sorry, all right. Meanwhile don't worry, Margey. I don't believe John North cares a Continental. I daresay he's mighty glad to be rid of me."

From the latter statement it may be surmised that Phillip was a little piqued at John's seeming indifference. Phillip was very happy nowadays and his resentment against John was rapidly cooling. After all, the worst had not happened; Betty had never heard of what he was pleased to call his disgrace. And even though John could claim no credit for that fact, yet Phillip was inclined to consider it a mitigating circumstance. It is probable that had John appeared to Phillip at that time and expressed regrets for having unintentionally wounded the other's pride, he would have been forgiven. But as John was unaware of having transgressed, that event was impossible. When Phillip wrote to Margaret of giving John an opportunity to explain, he referred to the note which he had frequently postponed writing but which he really intended to write.

Phillip conferred with Chester in regard to the theatre tickets, recognizing in his roommate an

authority on the subject. And Chester, after vainly endeavouring to persuade Phillip to see "Louis XI." instead of "Charles I.," as being rather more "bloody," came to his assistance with advice.

"What you want to do," he said, "is to go over to Thurston's and leave an order in advance. They'll get you just what you want."

"But won't that be awfully expensive?" asked Phillip.

"Well, maybe it would. I'd forgotten. The only thing to do, then, is to get in line."

"What's that?"

"You go to the theatre the night before the sale and stand in line until the next morning. It's not bad fun, really. I'll tell you what! We'll go in together and take turns waiting!"

"But I didn't know you were going to see him?"

"I wasn't, but I don't mind seeing "Sans Gene" again. We can have lots of fun getting tickets."

So the following Wednesday evening they went into town at ten o'clock, and after a light supper at Marliave's, insisted upon by Chester and partaken of at his expense, betook themselves to the theatre. They were by no means the first on the scene. Already fully a dozen persons were leaning against

the theatre wall and armed with camp stools, mackintoshes and umbrellas.

"We ought to have brought stools," said Chester. "How silly of me to forget."

"And I reckon we'll need umbrellas, too," added Phillip. "It looks a good deal like rain, don't you think so?"

Chester did.

"I'll tell you," he said. "I'll go back to the room and get a mackintosh and an umbrella; and maybe I can find a camp stool somewhere."

So back to college he went, while Phillip made himself number fourteen, or it may have been fifteen, in the line. After awhile the performance let out and the lobby was filled with men and women in evening dress, and the little narrow street became a bedlam as the carriages dashed up for their loads. It was quite interesting and Phillip enjoyed it. But about midnight the excitement waned and the novelty began to wear off. To make matters worse, it began to rain, gently, insistently, and the chill got under his overcoat and set him to shivering. Now and then a waiter left the line and tramped about and swung his arms, his claim to his position being respected by the rest. Most of them, Phillip con-

cluded, were speculators, though here and there stood one who was evidently, like himself, present from motives of economy. Phillip wondered what had become of Chester, and longed greatly for the promised umbrella and mackintosh. But at one o'clock Chester was still absent and Phillip gave up hoping for him. By that hour the throng had increased to fully half a hundred. Now and then a policeman strolled by, and once a vendor of sandwiches and coffee appeared and did a rushing business.

But it was tiresome, miserable work. Phillip was wet and sleepy and cold. If it hadn't been for Betty he would have given up long before the interminable night was over and gone home to bed. As it was, however, he stuck it out. When daylight came and the electric lamps grew dimmer and dimmer and finally flickered out he felt weak and dizzy, and the second repast of coffee and sandwiches failed to comfort him. At eight o'clock the line stretched the length of the street and an army of small speculators were offering to buy positions at the head. At half past nine he was on his way back to Cambridge, the three dearly bought slips of pasteboard in his pocket, a horrible taste in his mouth, a gone sensa-

tion in his stomach and a splitting headache. He went to sleep in the corner of the car and had to be awakened at the square. From thence he tramped across the Yard, sneezing at every third step, and found Chester dressing.

"I'm awfully sorry, Phil," the latter declared. "I didn't mean to do it. But I was so darned sleepy when I got back that I just laid down for a moment on the couch—just to get a dozen winks, you know. Well, when I woke up it was half past four, by jingo! Of course there was no use going back to town then, so I took my things off and went to bed. I'm awfully sorry, really!"

"It doesn't matter," replied the other. "I think I'll lie down awhile myself. Wake me in about an hour, will you?"

In the late afternoon he hunted up Everett.

"I got tickets for Monday night. Will you tell your sister, please? And I'll be at the house at seven fifteen. I reckon I'll go back now; my head aches and I'm kind of funny all over. I'm going to bed."

He staggered against a chair and subsided into it limply.

"Here, you come with me," said Everett.

He took him back to his room and didn't leave him until he was in bed with all the covers that could be found piled on top of him.

"Maybe I'd ought to send the doctor to you," said Everett undecidedly. But Phillip wouldn't hear of it. He was all right now, he declared between chattering teeth; all he needed was sleep. No, he didn't want any dinner. But would Everett please tell his mother and Betty——

Everett promised and went off doubtfully. By good fortune he met Chester on the avenue and told him of Phillip's plight, and Chester flew back to Thayer calling himself bad names. When he arrived Phillip was sitting up in bed singing happily:

"O, Annie Moore, sweet Annie Moore!
I shall never see sweet Annie any more!
She went away one summer day,
And I'll never see my Annie any more!
O, Annie Moore, sweet——"

Chester pushed him back against the tumbled pillows and drew the covers over him.

"Phil," he cried with a frightened sob in his voice, "Phil, please shut up!"

"O, Annie Moore——"

"Oh, Phil, please, *please* lie down and shut up!" begged Chester. "You're—you're daffy, you know!"

CHAPTER XXIV

JOHN stood on the platform of the Back Bay station awaiting the arrival of the Federal Express from Washington bearing Margaret. The time was a few minutes before seven of a blustery March morning, and down here underground the cold was intense. John thumped his gloved hands together and took a turn up the platform. A suburban express had just emptied a portion of its load, but the arrivals had already hurried away and the place was deserted. John glanced at the clock and for the fiftieth time wondered how he should greet Margaret. His heart was beating at a disconcerting rate, and his thoughts refused to grapple with the stupendous problem, but darted off to recollections of their parting nearly three months before, to what he must tell her about Phillip. And all the while he was conscious of a disappointing attempt to summon before him a mental picture of her. Her eyes, brown, deep, inscrutable, looked back at him from the gloom, but the rest of her features were

illusive, indistinct on the shadowy canvas of memory. And suddenly the long train thundered in.

He waited by the steps of the Pullman, and when the last passenger had descended turned away in keen disappointment. She had not come! But the next instant his eyes caught her farther up the platform, standing, a lithe figure in a gray cloth dress, looking perplexedly about her. She wore a great fur boa about her neck and her bag stood beside her. And after all his thought what he said to her was simply:

“Margaret!”

She turned with a little flash of pleasure and relief and gave him her hand.

“You didn’t sit up all night!” he exclaimed anxiously.

“No; I laid down. I slept very well.”

“But you shouldn’t have done that,” he said with a touch of exasperation. “You’ve tired yourself all out.”

She shook her head.

“No; I’m not tired,” she answered. “Tell me about Phillip, please.”

“Yes; but let us get out of here; it’s beastly cold.” He took her bag and led the way to the elevator.

"Phil is very ill, Miss Ryerson," he continued, "but there is no cause for alarm. That was the doctor's verdict last night. When we reach the cab I will tell you more.

"To the Lenox," he said to the cabman. "We're going to have breakfast before we go out," he explained as the door slammed behind him. "Are you warm enough?" He drew the rug about her and looked at her anxiously. Her face was very pale and there were dark shadows under her eyes. But she smiled and nodded in reply.

"And now about Phil, please, Mr. North," she said.

"As the telegram told you," John answered, "Phil's got pneumonia. As near as I can make out, he got wet through last Wednesday night and caught cold. It seems he wanted to get tickets for Irving and stood up in line all night at the theatre. It rained, and he didn't have any protection, and—well, the natural thing happened, I guess. He went to bed Thursday evening and he's been there ever since. The trouble declared itself Saturday, and we telegraphed at once."

"We didn't get it until yesterday afternoon," said Margaret. "Of course, mamma couldn't come, and so——"

"No; I didn't think she could. But—but couldn't you have brought one of the servants? I don't like the idea of you traveling up here all alone," he said half apologetically.

"It would have meant another fare," she answered simply. "I didn't think we ought to spend more than we had to. There will be the doctor's bill, you know. Is he—is he out of his head?"

"Yes; but that's to be expected, you know. The doctor—and by the way, he's the best I could find—the doctor says that Phil has a good, tough constitution and that he ought to pull through all right. Only it will be some time before he's well again."

"I know. The time is nothing if only—he gets well." Suddenly, to John's consternation, she turned her face away from him, laid her head against the cushion and wept softly from sheer fatigue and nervousness. He longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, and the temptation to do so was so great that he had to grit his teeth and look away from the slim, heaving shoulders.

"There's scarcely any question about his getting well," he said cheerfully. "He's got a splendid doctor, good care and a lot of strength. We'll pull him through all right, Miss Ryerson."

The averted head nodded. One small gray-gloved hand lay beside him. John laid his own upon it reassuringly and his heart leaped as he felt it seized and clung to desperately. As soon as he was sure of his voice he went on:

"They were afraid to take him to the hospital and so he's in his own room in Thayer. His roommate, young Baker, moved out and they put Phil into the study. The nurse has the bedroom. I've taken a room for you nearby, on Broadway. It's a nice house and I think you'll be very comfortable."

"You've been very kind," said a tremulous voice.

"Oh, no," he answered. "I've wished I could be of some real service, but there's so little a fellow can do. Now that you're here, I have a feeling that everything is going to be all right."

The hand drew itself away in search of a handkerchief and the cab came to a stop. Margaret dried her eyes, put back her hair and fixed her hat. Then she turned to John with a smile that was quite like those he remembered.

"I feel better," she said. "I was tired, after all, and—all the way I feared that something dreadful would happen before I got here. I shan't be so silly again. Do we get out here?"

The next week, in spite of Phillip's excellent constitution and the best of care he received, was an anxious one. Margaret spent day after day at the bedside and sometimes shared a night's watching with the professional nurse. Chester, very miserable for his share in the catastrophe, came twice daily to the door and went away comforted or alarmed, according to the news he received. And every morning a brougham stopped outside the Class of '79 gate and a liveried footman presented Mrs. Kingsford's compliments and begged to know Mr. Ryerson's condition.

Betty, sorrowful, fearful, sat at home and waited. That was all Betty could do, and it was the hardest. She became a very white-faced and hollow-eyed Betty, who ate almost nothing, and who alarmed Mr. and Mrs. Kingsford until, in desperation, they threatened to send her South. But ere the threat could be put into execution the footman returned from Cambridge one morning with the news that the crisis was over and that, unless a relapse occurred, the patient would recover. That day Betty ate four fried oysters at luncheon, and there was no more talk of exile.

Two days later John and David called for Margaret

at three o'clock in the afternoon and bullied her into taking a walk. David went under protest, and John, while insisting, really didn't want him. But he thought that perhaps Margaret would prefer having a third. It was a marvelously warm afternoon, and they went up to Elmwood and back. David stayed awake the entire time and excelled himself as a conversationalist. After that the walks were daily events when the weather allowed. David didn't always go, but it is not known that either John or Margaret felt the lack of his presence. March was very kind that year and gave day after day of spring skies and swelling buds. Phillip's recovery, slow as it was, filled Margaret with a great peace and contentment, while John was almost irresponsibly happy. They talked of every subject under the blue sky save one—the one nearest John's heart. He was careful to speak no word of his love, even though, as it sometimes seemed, everything conspired to compel him. Margaret was very kind, very gentle, and John might have been excused had he read something of encouragement in her bearing toward him. But he didn't. It did not for a moment occur to him that absence might have worked in his favour. Margaret had declared at

Elaine that she had no love for him, that she was assured she never could have, and he knew better than to think that three months of separation had made any difference in her sentiments. He had her promise, he consoled himself, and there was lots of time yet. If his plans turned out the way he expected them to the autumn might tell another tale. So he kept his love out of sight deep down in his heart, where it constantly rumbled like a dangerous volcano and threatened to erupt, and was evenly, calmly kind and thoughtful of her comfort and pleasure. And Margaret wondered and began to doubt.

There are several ways in which to take a census of one's friends. One way is to die; but that has its drawbacks. Another way is to be very ill and recover. Phillip was trying the latter method, and his census was growing surprisingly long. Fellows who shouted greetings to him across the Yard or nodded smilingly in class came and left cards with sincere little scrawls on the backs. After the tide had set firmly in his favour, flowers and fruit and strange delicacies came at every hour. David had sincere faith in the strength-restoring properties of a certain brand of calf's-foot jelly that

was obtainable only at one high-class grocery in New York, and had a case of it delivered at Thayer. The Kingsfords sent flowers every day. Guy Bassett made a specialty of mandarin oranges, and Chester searched the Boston markets from end to end before he found grapes that entirely satisfied his fastidious taste.

I don't want to throw the least discredit on the motives that prompted some of these offerings; I only mention, as having possibly some bearing on the proceedings, that men had a habit in those days of asking each other, "Have you seen Phil Ryerson's sister? Man, she's a perfect peach!"

And very often the reply was: "No; is that so? That reminds me; I was going to leave my card on the poor duffer. Guess I'll drop around there this afternoon."

It had been decided that as soon as Phillip was in condition to travel he was to be taken home, and Margaret began to count the days. Phillip's recovery was slow. But, as the doctor reassuringly reminded her, he had been a pretty sick boy, and in getting well it was a good policy to make haste slowly. Phillip was hungrily eating dozens of oranges and drinking quarts and quarts of milk

every day, and querulously accusing all hands of trying to starve him. But for all this he was still very weak and slept a good deal of the time. And the April recess was approaching.

At last, one warm and showery afternoon, he was allowed to see visitors. Margaret had been looking forward to that moment and laying her plans. John came at half past three. She met him at the door. "He is sitting up," she whispered. "I want you to go in and see him; will you?"

John hesitated, but only because he feared his appearance would agitate and excite Phillip.

"You said you'd forgiven him," she pleaded.

"There was little to forgive," he answered. "It isn't that; but do you think he wants to see me?"

"Yes," she replied eagerly; "I'm sure he does."

Phillip was sitting, pillow-propped, in a huge arm-chair beside the bed. He wore a flowered dressing-gown of Chester's, a thing of vivid red and lavender and green, and his pale face looked whiter by contrast. Beside him, on the little table, a bunch of fragrant violets thrust their long, graceful stems into a glass. They were the only flowers in the room, and even they would have been banished with the rest by the nurse had not Phillip rebelled. There was

a card leaning against the glass—a large, square, important-looking card, bearing thirteen small, severe letters. Phillip was looking sentimentally from card to blossoms when the door opened again.

“Here’s some one to see you, Phil,” Margaret announced. She passed through into the bedroom, closing the door behind her. Phillip turned his head languidly, and at sight of the caller the blood rushed into his face and then receded as quickly, leaving it paler than before. John took one thin hand and spoke naturally and simply as he gripped it.

“Phil, old man, this *is* good. You’ve had us rather worried, you know.” He sat down on the edge of the bed. “How are you feeling?”

“Better, thank you,” Phillip answered, rather stiffly. “It’s powerful slow work, though.”

“It must seem so. But your sister tells me that she expects you to be fit to make the trip home by the middle of next week. You’ll soon pick up at Elaine, I’ll bet. Why, hang it, Phil, if I were on my last legs and some kind person shipped me down there to your place I’d be out hunting the traction engine in a week!”

Phillip smiled, but the smile didn't last. He put his hands together and began interlacing the fingers, just as Margaret had done, John thought, on the porch at Elaine that morning.

"That's a jolly smelly bunch of violets," said John.

"Yes, they're very sweet."

"Who sent them?" He leaned forward and read the card. "Oh, I beg your pardon, Phil!"

"It's—it's no secret," said Phillip.

"Kingsford's sister, Phil?"

"Yes."

"I saw her once; an awfully nice-looking girl."

"Yes. They've been mighty good to me, the Kingsfords."

"They're nice people," said John. "Have you seen Everett?"

"No; you're the first one—that's been here—that I've seen, you know."

"I see. Chester Baker has been in a terrible state of funk over you, Phil. He told me one day that it was his fault that you were ill, and that if you 'pegged out'—to use his own elegant expression—he was going to China. I don't know why China particularly; he didn't say. But maybe he was going to turn Boxer."

"It wasn't his fault," said Phillip. Then, after a pause: "The fellows have been mighty kind, John; whole stacks of them left cards and fruit and things, Margey says—fellows I didn't know very well, some of them." He paused again. "And you—Margey says you've been awfully good to her—and me; and—" he leaned forward and arranged Betty's card in a new position, a flush of colour in his cheeks—"thank you," he muttered.

"Nonsense, Phil; I've done very little. I'm not nearly even with you yet for your kindness to me at Elaine. I enjoyed myself there more than I have anywhere for a long while. Well, I must be going or the nurse will throw me out. Hurry up and get well, Phil." He held out his hand. Phillip laid his own in it.

"Good-by. You'll come again?"

"Often as they'll let me, old chap." He moved toward the door. With his hand on the knob he heard his name spoken and turned.

"Come back a minute, will you?" Phillip was asking.

"Of course. I don't want to rush away, Phil, but there's the tyrannical nurse to think of. What is it, old chap?" He walked back to the chair. Phillip

was bunching up the rug over his knees with nervous fingers.

"John," he began in a low voice.

"Hold on now, Phil," the other broke in. "If you say one word about—that—I'll get out of here so quick you won't see me go; and I won't come back, either."

"But I must," insisted Phillip. "You've got to say—you've got to forgive——"

"Chuck it, Phil! Listen to me a minute. I made a mistake—unintentional, Phil—and you didn't like it. I'm sorry, and you've pardoned it—or you're going to. It's all over with and it's all right, old chap; it's all right!"

Phillip shook his head.

"It isn't," he muttered. "There's—that night when I met you in the hall——"

"And we both lost our tempers. I remember. Well, we've found them again. Now let's forget about it, Phil. You get well and come back and we'll begin over again. I'll see if I can't be a better guardian. Good-by again, old man."

"Well——"

"Yes, it's all right."

"I know, but—I'm sorry, John. I was a little

beast. You ought to have kicked me. Why didn't you?"

"Did think of it," laughed John, "but concluded I'd better not try it on."

"And—well—you're sure it's all right now, John?"

"All serene, Phil." He rumped the other's hair. "Get well, eh?"

"Yes."

"You'll be back after recess, feeling fine. We'll have a good time this spring; there's no place like Cambridge in spring, Phil."

"I wish you were going to be here next year," mourned Phillip.

"So do I. But you'll have David; I'm going to make him guardian in my place. Besides, I've got a plan—but I'll tell you about that later. So long."

"Good-by. I wish you'd come to-morrow!"

"I will. Thunder! here's Miss Davis!"

But it wasn't the nurse; it was Margaret who appeared at the bedroom door. She glanced swiftly from one to the other and smiled happily at what she saw.

After that John came almost every day and Phillip's recovery was more rapid. It was Phillip who thought of asking John back to Elaine.

"I wish you could go with us," he said one day when they were discussing the trip. "I shall be an awful bother to Margey, you see. Couldn't you come along and stay with us for awhile? We wouldn't ask you to remain for the whole recess, of course, but—two or three days, say——"

"Oh, if you would!" said Margaret. "I've been wondering how I was to get Phil home safely. But perhaps you were going somewhere else? We haven't any right to ask you to take all the trouble, Mr. North, I know."

"If you think I can help I'll be very glad to go with you," he answered readily. "Recess doesn't begin until Saturday, but if you leave Thursday I can sign off, I think. I don't believe, however, that I ought to stay at Elaine, Miss Ryerson; you'll have trouble enough with this cantankerous invalid without having a guest to bother with."

"I'm not cantankerous!" cried Phillip. "I'm mighty good; ask Margey! And, anyhow, you're not a guest; you're just—just John. And I want you to stay a week. If you don't I shall have a relapse. I reckon there's one coming on now! Will you stay? Quick! It's coming!"

"Maybe," laughed John. "For a day or two,

anyhow, Phil, if your sister will put up with the bother."

Callers came thick that week. Chester was among the first. He reviled himself eloquently and at great length, and assured Phillip that he hadn't had a good night's sleep since the other had been ill. Phillip begged him to go back to his room and get some at once and stop talking nonsense. David came, and Guy Bassett, and more beside. David told Phillip solemnly that he was sure he would get well if he stuck to the calf's-foot jelly; and Phillip very carefully refrained from telling him that the contents of the case were still untouched.

Betty's violets continued to come every morning, and of late little notes—rather incoherent and very sprawly—came with them. Phillip spent a good deal of time with a pad on his knee answering them. Of course Margaret had learned about Betty. Charged with the fell crime of being in love, Phillip had made a clean breast of it all, and Margaret had perforce to listen, sometimes for an hour at a time, to enthusiastic eulogies of Miss Betty Kingsford. But for all that she had no intention of accepting Betty on such slim evidence as a lover's praises; she must see her first. As a matter of fact, Margaret

had her doubts as to the worthiness of Miss Kingsford, just as she would have had doubts as to the worthiness of any girl who attained to the honour of becoming Mrs. Phillip Ryerson. Deep in her heart she doubted if any girl was quite good enough for Phil.

Phillip saw Betty but once before he went home. It had been all arranged beforehand. Everett was to bring her out on Wednesday afternoon; they were to leave Thursday evening. Phillip was in a state of illy concealed excitement and impatience all that day. He worried Margaret half to death with his constant suggestions for the improvement of the room; chairs were moved hither and thither and then moved back again; flowers were distributed upon all sides; he would have had the pictures on the wall rearranged had not Margaret's patience come to an end and had she not flatly refused to move another thing.

"You must be crazy, Phil," she exclaimed once, almost crossly. (She was a little bit jealous, had she but known it.) "The idea of moving everything in the room simply because Miss Kingsford is coming!"

"I don't see that," Phillip had objected stoutly.

"When a fellow's going to receive the girl he's to marry——"

"Shucks!" answered Margaret, unimpressed by his intense dignity; "you know you can't be married for three years at least. And besides, you say yourself that she hasn't really promised—that there's no engagement!"

"We're as good as engaged," answered Phillip. "She just hasn't said so out and out, that's all."

Betty had thought out just what she was going to say and just how she was going to behave. Phillip's sister would be there, of course, and so she would be very dignified and a bit prim, perhaps. She would shake hands with Phil and tell him she was glad he was so much better, and that he must hurry and get fully well. As for the sister—well, Betty hoped she would like her. But if she didn't—Betty made a face at herself in the mirror. So Miss Elizabeth Kingsford wore her very best gown and descended from the carriage with great dignity. Yet, when she entered the study, followed by Everett, and caught sight of Phillip, she completely forgot her part.

She was unprepared for the thin, white-faced and big-eyed Phil that confronted her, and she gave a

little gasp of pain and dismay. Miss Elizabeth Kingsford was lost at the door, and it was just Betty that ran across the study and plumped herself into Phillip's arms and kissed him and cried over him a little.

"Oh, Phil, you're so thin!" she sobbed. "I didn't know—you—would be like—this!"

"Betty, dear Betty!" he murmured to her, a very happy Phillip. "It's all right, dear; don't bother about me!"

"N-no, I wo-on't!" sniffled Betty. Then, with a recollection of her brother and Margaret, she raised her head from Phillip's shoulder and faced them half defiantly. Everett's look of amazement summoned a little tremulous laugh.

"Oh, it's all right," she explained, drawing an impatient white-gloved hand across her eyes; "we—we're engaged, you know."

CHAPTER XXV

It was April in New England, but here at Elaine it was May—warm, verdant, fragrant May. To be sure, they called it April, but John, sprawled out on his back on the terrace before the house, with the soft swaying of branches above him and the sun-flecks dancing back and forth across his face, knew better. It was utter nonsense to pretend that only five days had passed since they had left Cambridge. He took his pipe from the corner of his mouth, gripped his hands anew under his head, sighed luxuriously and closed his eyes.

The morning world was filled with sound, with warmth, with colour. From the direction of the stables came the whinnying of a young colt in paddock; the turkeys, peafowls and chickens uttered their notes which, discordant in themselves, yet fitted harmoniously into the great chorus as the growling of the bassoon, the rasping of the bass-viol or the shrilling of the piccolo fits into and lends completeness to a full orchestral effect. Birds,

thousands of them, it seemed, piped and trilled, chirped and bubbled—feathered flutes and 'cellos and clarionettes, tossing their melody into the soft air from swaying tree-top or dropping it from leaf-hidden branch to filter downward with the dripping sunbeams. Bees were abroad, too, workers and drones, adding their booming bass to the symphony, while through all, the wind and the leaves, masters of melody, supplied a low, murmurous strain, insistent yet unobtrusive, the theme of Nature's spring-song.

And for this performance what a stage-setting was there! Overhead, the bluest blue that ever poet sang or artist strove to catch, and against it a few soft, fluffy clouds, caught here and there against the heavens like clots of snowy foam. Below, wide, far-stretching fields and hillsides of new, tender green arabesqued with winding brown roads, vine-decked fences and shimmering blue water laughing through bordering trees. Fields were no longer bare expanses of warm, upturned loam; they were carpets of green velvet. Far and near the trees were in leaf, some fully arrayed for the summer, others just trying on their new garments with bashful diffidence. And what a wealth, what a bewildering

variety of greens they presented! Golden-greens and russet-greens, blue-greens and gray-greens, the green of chrysoberyl and of emerald; every hue and tint and gradation of tint!

The far hills were asleep in the sunlight under slumber-robcs of palest mauve. In the direction of Melville fantastic spirals and swirls of smoke and steam arose and melted into the sky. Here and there a farmhouse peered out from an embowering group of trees. Half a mile away a great blue wagon, drawn by six horses, jolted along the road; and the creaking of the great wheels, the voice of the driver and the tinkling of the bells came, mellowed by distance, up the hill. John lifted his head lazily and watched it for a moment. Behind him Elaine basked, white-walled and pillared, leaf-shadowed, in the sunlight. Flowers blossomed and the air was redolent of their perfume.

Presently John raised himself on his elbow, yawned and looked about him. In the shadow of the portico Phillip was stretched fast asleep in a steamer chair, the magazine which he had been reading a half-hour ago sprawling with rumpled leaves beside him where it had fallen from his hands. Maid dozed beside him.

"Lazy beggar," muttered John virtuously.

He recovered his pipe from the grass, thereby interfering with the interested examination of a black ant, and filled it slowly, his gaze loitering lovingly across the landscape.

"It seems too good to be true," he said to himself, bringing his feet together tailor-fashion and scratching a sputtering match on the sole of one broad shoe. "I can't imagine a man wanting anything better than this." He lighted his pipe and sent a column of soft gray smoke up into the branches of the big oak. "To know that this big, beautiful chunk of God's earth is yours, with its fields and forests, hills and streams, yours to do with as you wish——" He shook his head eloquently and blew another cloud of smoke into the sunlight. "To be master of it! To plow its soil and seed it; to cut its timber and build upon it—— To the dickens with your wire nails and your stuffy offices; to the deuce with cities and clubs and white waistcoats; to the——" Language again failed him. He blew more smoke.

"There's everything here to hand," he went on again; "timber for planks—there ought to be a sawmill, though—stone for foundations, gravel

for road-building—a whole hill of it ready for the quarrying—clay for bricks. A man could pretty near get everything he needed off the land; he might have to send to Melville for window-glass and door-knobs. I wouldn't be surprised, though, if there was ochre somewhere about; a chap could grind his own paint.

“There's the site for the house over yonder—‘yonder's’ appropriately Southern, by the way—on that round hill,” he thought, taking his pipe from his mouth and pointing with the stem as though he had a listener. “It's almost as high as this; there can't be more than twenty feet difference, I guess—that is, I *reckon*. There'd be about three acres of lawn, and the drive would sweep up to it in a long, easy curve. I'd have the building face the east, of course. The stables and out-buildings would be strung together about half-way down the farther slope, toward the creek bottom. There'd be no use trying to build a Southern style house so long as Elaine stood here to make it look like thirty cents. No; a modified old English would be best, something long and low and hospitable looking. Ten or twelve thousand ought to pay for it. We mustn't

be extravagant at first; we've our living to make."

He relighted his pipe, which had gone out, and lay back, leaning on one elbow. Over at the stable Will was cleaning a harness and singing softly in the sunlight. A peafowl approached tentatively and viewed John's recumbent and motionless form with suspicious eye, her neck stretched forth ludicrously, her expressionless, unblinking eyes like beads of glass.

"Oh, rubber!" muttered John. He tossed a pebble at her and she turned with a disgusted squawk and hurried away. He went on with his dreaming.

"I'd get Markham, if I could; Phil would scarcely need him, I should think. He ought to go with the place, anyhow, like any other fixture. He's a genuinely good fellow, and I guess, as Phil says, he's the best overseer in the county. I think, with Markham here, I could make it go from the start. Of course, there'd be somewhat of an outlay at first. I can see where twenty or thirty thousand could be sunk without trouble; yes, easily that. I guess dad was about right when he put it at fifty thousand.

“There’d be plenty of hard work, and that’s what I want—work that’ll make a fellow hungry and tired and sleepy. But I’d be going ahead all the time; every day’s labour would show, and the end would be worth toiling for. It’d be just the kind of work that’s more than half pleasure. And there’d be plenty of fun, too. There’s the shooting; and there’d be a few good nags and some dogs; and I’d have Davy down here often, of course; maybe he’d stay awake if he was riding to hounds. And I’d lay out a links and teach the natives to play golf; there’s old Colonel What’s-his-name—Brownell, isn’t it? He’s a regular old sport, and I’ll bet he’d take hold in great style. And there’s Phil, and some of those chaps in town; also there’s ‘Uncle Bob’—he’d come any old time, I guess, and stay as long as there was a drop of liquor left. Oh, I wouldn’t want for society. Only if—if what I want happens they can all go hang!

“If!” he sighed and shook his head. “So much depends on ‘if’! I’ll know some day.” He took a letter from his pocket and looked at it, tapping it approvingly with his knuckles. It bore a foreign stamp and postmark and had the appearance of having been carried about in that pocket for some time.

Presently he drew forth the inclosure and began to read:

“DEAR JOHN:—Yours of the 22nd ult. at hand and finds us till at Cannes. My health continues to improve, I am glad to say, and your mother’s illness is passed. We are both looking forward with impatience to the return, which will be, unless present plans change, the 3rd June from Havre. Now about that Virginia place. You say you want it and so I say go ahead and get it. Keep an eye on your option. I don’t fear Corliss. He’s as honest as they’re made. But I don’t know as much about the owners. So advise you to see to an extension about a fortnight before option runs out. If they won’t extend you may buy if you want to. I’ve directed McCullough to honour your draft for five thousand. That ought to hold it until I reach home.

“Think your decision not to purchase unless owners want you as a neighbour rather quixotic, but of course don’t know the ins and outs of the matter. I’ll trust you to do what’s sensible, John. Be sure and have the title examined into thoroughly before you buy. Get a local man to do this; it’s a better plan. Offer him a good sum to find a flaw. If he

can't win his money you may be pretty certain that title's O. K. I don't want to bank on the success of your project yet. I'd rather learn something about it. I know wire nails, John, but beef cattle are out of my books. Anyhow, you can't stand to lose a great deal, and if the climate down there agrees with me I'll buy you out, maybe, if you can't make a go of it. I don't promise, understand. Anyhow, it's your money you're buying with. I told you that in the first letter. So think of it as that and stretch it as far as it will go. Get a good grip on each end and pull like blazes.

"If your house is ready by winter we'll have a try at your wonderful climate. Don't know about the benefit to be derived from riding horses over fences after a lot of yellow hound-dogs, but maybe I'll have a try at it. Like the idea of those partridges better. When you get to be fifty-four yourself you'll understand why I'm not keen about chasing foxes. I've got about three dozen more bones to ache than you have, I guess. Colonel Thingmabob must be a blanked old idiot to scurry around the country at his age. That's my opinion of the Colonel, John.

"Don't trouble about the factory. I'd rather see you a good cattle raiser or farmer than a poor

mill man. And I've had my doubts for two or three years past as to your ever turning out the latter. We'll be back in plenty of time to see you graduate, so do things up properly and don't be niggardly when it comes to spreading. No cheap claret-cup for your old father, John; remember that. Let me hear how the negotiations progress. Your mother sends her love and says she will write on Sunday. Be a good boy and don't let business interfere with study.

Your aff'te father,

"WILLIAM H. NORTH."

John smiled and returned the thin, crinkley sheets to their envelope. "Dad's a mighty good sort," he told himself warmly. "But he'll never get a chance to buy me out; not in a thousand years. This thing is going to go! If—oh, hang that 'if'! I'm going to settle it right now!"

He sprang to his feet with a sudden squaring of his shoulders, knocked the tobacco from his pipe and strode toward the house. As he went up the steps Phillip stirred and opened his eyes, blinking wonderingly.

"I must have been asleep, I reckon," he said drowsily.

"I reckon you were," laughed John. "How are you feeling?"

"Like a two-year-old." He stretched his arms over his head, yawned, and smiled contentedly up into the other's face. "This is great, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes; great! I wish I was going to stay for more of it."

"Oh, you're not going to-morrow," Phillip replied.

"I think I am, though." After a pause he continued: "There's just one thing that can keep me, Phil, and I'm greatly afraid that it isn't going to happen."

"What is it? I'll make it happen!"

"You couldn't," laughed John, moving toward the door.

"But—— Here, hold on! What is it?" cried Phillip. But John's footsteps were dying away in the hall, and Phillip moved as though to follow, hesitated, yawned again, closed his eyes sleepily and presently dozed off once more. A great bumble-bee, lumbering majestically about in a new spring suit of black velvet, spied the gay-hued colour of the neglected magazine and settled down upon a lithographed spray of apple blossoms with an antici-

patory boom of pleasure. There followed a moment of pregnant silence. Then he arose, quivering with amazement and disgust, and circled off into the golden air, buzzing loud tidings of the deception.

The sun rose higher and higher and the shadow of the house crept inch by inch across the portico floor. In the trees the tireless birds sang on and on, allegro, adagio, scherzo, over and over, a pæan of exquisite joy. At the stable the colt lay asleep in the paddock, and before the door, with a half-cleaned bridle over his knees, Will slumbered peacefully in the sunshine. From the cool, dim hall came eleven soft and silvery chimes from the old rosewood clock.

CHAPTER XXVI

"I WANT to talk business," said John. He swung himself onto the library table and took one knee into his hands. "I'm not keeping you from any of those household duties with which you are wearing your young life away?"

Margaret shook her head. "I have nothing to do until it is time for dinner. Do you know I fear I am getting tired of being a housekeeper." She looked about her in mock alarm. "Ever since I came back I have been good for nothing. I suppose it was that month of idleness. For the first time in my life I wish I were a man. I'd like to travel, travel for—oh, for months and months!"

"Where?" he asked.

"Anywhere—everywhere! Just go about and see things and not care when I arrived or where I arrived." She laughed softly. "There, that's my first revolt against my lot. And it shall be my last. I'm glad mamma didn't hear me. She'd be terribly alarmed and worried."

"Mrs. Ryerson is comfortable this morning?" asked John.

"Yes; she feels quite bright." After a moment, "Do you always make mothers fall in love with you, Mr. North?" she asked.

"Always," he answered very gravely. "It's my foxy way. . . You see, Miss Ryerson, most daughters are dutiful enough to follow their mothers' example."

"Oh," said Margaret, "I see." She avoided his glance and dropped into the high-backed, old-fashioned chair by the front window. Below her a bed of many-hued pansies trembled and nodded drowsily in the breeze. The library was dark and quiet. The open windows admitted the fragrant air from the garden, and the musty, bookish smell that usually pervaded the room was gone. "And the business?" asked Margaret. John started.

"Oh, yes, the business," he said. "It's this. When I was here at Christmas time I told you that I wanted to try my hand at making a living down here in Virginia. You weren't very encouraging, if you remember, but—well, as I said once before, I was born hopeful. And so I still want to try it. You told me then that you would be glad to have

me for a neighbour—and friend. Have you changed your mind?"

"No," answered Margaret. "But do you mean that you are thinking of settling around here somewhere?"

"That's my idea. In fact, I am thinking of buying from you."

"Oh!" Margaret's eyes grew wide. "But——"

"The thing sounds rather brutal, I know," he went on, "but if Elaine must be sold—and, as far as I've heard, it's still on the market—it occurs to me that possibly you'd just as lief I would have it as the next one. Am I right, Miss Ryerson?"

"Yes; I'd far rather it went to you. Only, I fear—I don't think I told you, did I, that some one holds an option on it?"

John shook his head, but didn't look worried.

"Of course, they may not buy," she continued, "but Mr. Corliss seems quite certain that they will. Oh, I'm so sorry! I wish it was going to be you, Mr. North. I—we all—would so much rather it went to a friend, you see."

"But perhaps the parties won't buy," said John cheerfully. "Or maybe they'd be willing to sell to

me at an advance. Corliss didn't say who—er—who they are?"

"No, he didn't. But I reckon they're Northerners." There was a trace of displeasure in her voice, and John smiled.

"Well, then, if I should come to you and tell you that I was ready to buy the place, fifteen hundred acres, without the home farm here, you'd sell to me? If the other people were out of it, I mean?"

"Yes; gladly."

"Thank you. I fancy I shall be around some day with that announcement," he said smilingly.

She looked across at him speculatively.

"I've changed my mind about you," she said finally.

"As to——" For an instant he dared hope.

"As to your not making a success of it. I think you could."

"Why? What makes you think so?" he asked. She shook her head.

"I don't know; I just think so."

"Well, I hope you're right. For I mean to have the place if I can. I'm leaving to-morrow, and I shall see Corliss and find out about it at once."

"Must you go to-morrow?" she asked, her eyes

on the pansies. "Couldn't you telegraph just as well?"

"Oh, I was going anyhow, you know," he answered lightly. "I've stayed long enough—longer, in fact, than I agreed to—with myself, I mean," he added, in response to her look of surprise. There was a moment of silence. Then he went on with a trace of awkwardness:

"I told Phil awhile ago that there was only one thing that could make me disregard the decencies and stay on here longer."

She looked at him questioningly.

"One thing?"

"Yes."

"Why, what is that?"

He shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you. I thought that maybe you'd be able to guess."

"Oh," she murmured, almost under her breath. Her face grew rosy as an understanding of his meaning came to her and she turned her eyes again to the pansies.

"But I also told him," John continued with an attempt at nonchalance, wishing to spare her embarrassment, "that that one thing was not at all likely

to happen. So—so I'm not disappointed, you see, Miss Ryerson."

There was a moment of silence. Then:

"But it might." As soon as the words were uttered she regretted them and arose from her chair in a sudden panic. There was no reply. She wondered what he was thinking, what his face said. The stillness grew and grew. She longed intensely to look around, yet could not have done so had life itself depended upon it. Then, when she had begun to think he was no longer there—

"You mean——?" he asked in low tones that, she thought, trembled a little.

She stared hard at the fluttering blossoms beneath the casement and moistened her lips.

"Why, I mean that if you didn't expect it to happen, it—it might, mightn't it?" She gave a little nervous laugh. "You know they say it's the unexpected that always happens."

"Oh . . . Yes . . . I see." His tone spoke eloquently of disappointment. She was sorry and—yes, disappointed, too. She turned away from the window after a moment and was very glad that the room was so dim; her cheeks were afire.

"I must go now and see about dinner," she said evenly.

"Well——" But he got no further, nor did she move toward the door. Instead:

"You really must leave to-morrow?" she asked politely.

"Yes; I must, really. You see—the unexpected isn't going to happen, after all." He smiled across at her.

"But—perhaps the unexpected is too—too impossible!"

"Yes; I fear it is," he answered dejectedly.

"Oh, I didn't mean that!" she cried, and then stopped in a sudden tumult of embarrassment.

"Thank you; but I fear it's true, just the same. The unexpected is one of those wonderful things that are too good to happen—except in books." He swung himself off the table, still smiling. "But I'm keeping you?"

"No." She shook her head almost impatiently and stood there interlacing her slim fingers in the way he knew so well. Suddenly she raised her eyes to his and asked abruptly:

"Do you still remember the promise you—the

promise I made you?" she asked. The eyes looked large and fearful and her face was pale.

"Yes," he answered, wonderingly.

"And would you mind repeating it?"

"You promised that if you ever grew to—care for me you would tell me," he responded.

"Yes."

"Well?" he asked. "And now?"

"And now I—I——" She paused and lowered her eyes.

"I see," he said gravely. "You want me to absolve you from it? I know; it was an absurd thing to ask of you. I had no business doing it. I understand that now, Margaret. That is what you are trying to tell me, isn't it?"

"No," she said softly.

"You—you don't want me to let you off?" he cried amazedly, gladly. She shook her head silently.

"And—and if the time ever should come, Margaret, you will tell me? You still promise that?"

"Yes." The reply was low, scarce a whisper, but he heard it. A great wondering delight swayed him. He moved impulsively toward her, but stopped doubtfully.

Through the open windows, into the dim, silent

room, floated the melody of spring and of love; the exquisite outpourings of a hundred gladsome birds, the humming of a myriad insects, the gentle lisp of the soft wind amidst the branches. And with it came the heart-stirring fragrance of opening buds and swaying blossoms, the wonderful incense of spring which is also the incense of love.

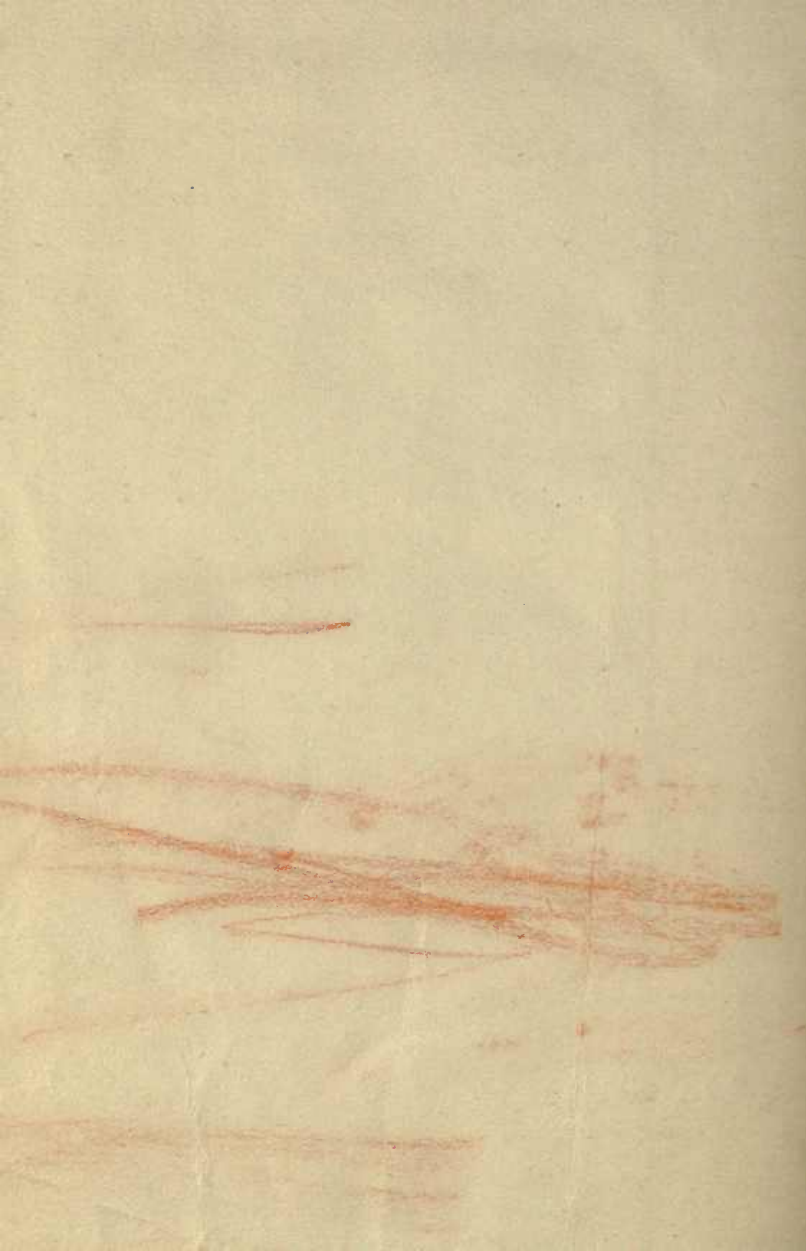
Margaret raised her head slowly until her eyes, deep and glowing, met John's. They were no longer fearful; they were glorious.

"Ah, can't you see?" she whispered pleadingly.

A flame of colour swept into her face and she laughed softly—a laugh that thrilled him through and through. The interlaced fingers parted and she threw her arms wide open in a sudden gesture of utter surrender.

"Can't you—won't you understand that I'm—I'm trying to tell you—now?"

THE END



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